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Methodus Evangelica:

OR, A

MODEST ESSAY

Upon the True

Scriptural-Rational Way

OF

Preaching the Gospel.

Being some DISCOURSES upon the *Homiletical*, *Textual*, and *Occasional* Method of Preaching.

Together with an APPENDIX concerning *Lecturing*, and an Account of the *Matter*, *Dialect* and *Frame* conceived to be most proper for Gospel-Sermons.

The whole being designed to point out the great *Seriousness* and *Wisdom*, which especially at this Day are so necessary towards Preaching and Adorning the Glorious Gospel.

Eccles. 12. 9, 10. *And moreover because the Preacher was wise, —He sought out and set in order many Proverbs — sought to find out acceptable Words.*

By THO. BLACKWELL, SS.Th.P.

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TO THE

VENERABLE

General Assembly

OF THE

Church of *SCOTLAND.*

Very Reverend and Honourable,

THE *Glory* of the Most High God, and the *Salvation* of Man the Lord of the Lower World, being undeniably two Objects most worthy of the Divine Mind; Infinite Wisdom was accordingly from all Eternity exercised about them: The Produce of which was the Glorious Gospel.

Which being the Deity's Grand Project towards displaying the Glorious Persons, In-

finite Perfections, Deep Counsels, and Excellent Workings of the Great Three in One; it must infallibly deserve a *Ministerial Dispensation* perfect to the last degree.

That so its important Truths being delivered with great *Seriousness* and *Wisdom*, it may be at once both preached and adorned. Both which are the more necessary, that as the want of the *former* hath spoiled thousands of elaborate Sermons in the Divine account; so the not studying the *latter* hath too often made the Gospel contemptible in the sight of Men.

And what a great pity is it, that ever its *Reputation* should fail? For, who will but seriously consider the Infinite Mind to be capable of great and deep Thought, must certainly next acknowledge, that the Contrivance for which the Divine Wisdom *valueth* it self most, cannot fail of being something very *extraordinary*, *important*, and *glorious*.

And if this wonderful Piece of deep Counsel be enquired for; the Scriptures sufficiently proclaim the same, while they so often point out the *great Mystery of God in Christ*, revealed in the Gospel, as the Project in which the Deity principally glorieth; as is clear from that antient Divine Exclamation, *Behold my Servant whom I uphold, mine Elect in whom my Soul delighteth.*

And

And as this Contrivance was the Deity's great Thought from all Eternity, as containing the *manifold Wisdom* of God therein, so it had the Honour of being first published by himself in the Garden: Since which time the Adorable Trinity, hath been principally exercised about it: The Father sending the Son, and the Son becoming Man and dying, the Holy Ghost gradually revealing those secret Counsels, and writing them to Men below. And being revealed, do contain such a perfect *Composure* of the joint Actings and Influence of all the Divine Persons and Perfections, as to give ground for the Revelation thereof, not only to be termed the *Glorious*, but the *Everlasting* Gospel.

And indeed no wonder, if we do but a little reflect on the great and noble Effects produced upon its very first Intimation; for behold, upon Man's Fall, no sooner was the Glorious *Immanuel* proclaimed, but instantly the justling and (to our apprehension) contending Attributes of Justice and Mercy, were wonderfully reconciled, the awakened Conscience of trembling Man powerfully allayed, the old Serpent confounded, and the Divine Glory effectually retrieved.

So that it is nothing strange, suppose not only the Pillars of this lower World continue unshaken for the Gospel's sake, but also

even the glorious Oeconomy of the higher Houſe, between *Jehovah* and the Mediator, have a very great Concernment therein.

And if ſo, how highly reaſonable is it? that the Miniſterial Diſpenſation thereof ſhould conſiſt of the moſt *important* Truths, the moſt *excellent* Method, moſt *ſuitable* Dialect, and livelieſt Frame, which Miniſters poſſibly can attain to.

Accordingly to advance all thoſe Ends, the following Diſcourſes conſiſt of three Parts.

The Firſt deſcribeth the two grand Characters of Goſpel-Miniſters, to wit, that they ought to be *Men of God*, and *Men of good Report*.

The Second pointeth out the various Methods, *Homiletical*, *Textual*, and *Occaſional*, together with the Dialect and Frame ſuppoſed to be moſt proper for the Diſpenſation of the Truths of the glorious Goſpel. And in regard the right Management of the *Application* of Sermons, is of great conſequence, there is accordingly ſubjoined a Diſcourſe concerning the right Improvement of the ſeveral *Inferences* ordinarily uſed in Preaching.

To all which, conſidering the great Uſefulneſs of right *Lecturing*, there is alſo an Appendix, containing the ſeveral Rules which ſeem moſt proper to be obſerved there-

therein, towards accompliſhing the Ends of ſuch an Exerciſe.

The Third declareth and openeth up the *Matter* of the Goſpel, ſhewing the ſeveral Doctrines adjuſted to the various *Spiritual States* and Conditions of Men. Where firſt the *Unregenerate* Eſtate, along with the ſeveral Claſſes of the Prophane, Hypocritical, Secure and Awaken'd Sinner, together with the ſeveral Truths proper for each of them, are conſidered. And next the *Regenerate*, where the Doctrines adjuſted to young Converts, to the more grown and eſtabliſhed, to the ſpiritually decayed and backſliden, to the deſerted, tempted, and afflicted Chriſtian, are all in proportion to thoſe ſeveral Conditions of the People of God particularly diſcourſed.

In publiſhing of all which I was not a little encouraged by the affecting Conſideration of the *Great Apoſtle* of the Gentiles, that Great and Noble *Pattern* of Miniſterial Qualifications and Performances.

Whom if we do but a little ſurvey, behold we ſhall find, 1. With reſpect to his *perſonal Qualifications*, that as he was brought up at the Feet of *Gamaliel*, ſo alſo God from above *revealed* his Son in him, thereby making up a moſt accompliſhing Mixture of ſaving Divine Knowledge and ſolid Human Literature. As, 2. If we enquire into the

grand *Principle* and *End* of his engaging with the Work of the Miniſtry, behold as *Love* to our Lord conſtraineth him, ſo to him to live was *Chriſt*: Meaning, that the great Deſign of his Life was to advance the Intereſts and Glory of the Mediator's Kingdom. And ſo, 3. If the great *Subject* of his Sermons be obſerved, it ſhall be found that *Chriſt* and him crucified, was the Doctrine which he principally determined to inſiſt upon. As, 4. If we reflect upon the *Seriouſneſs* and *Livelineſs* of his *Frame*, behold we ſhall find him warning his People with Tears, and Travailing as in Birth and Pain, till Chriſt ſhould be formed in them. And, 5. As to his *Dialect* we ſhall find it grave and weighty, conſiſting of a Form of ſound Words. As, 6. With reſpect to his *Converſation*, behold he is not only blameleſs but convincing and exemplary, practically commending Chriſt and ſerious Godlineſs to the World.

But which is moſt remarkable, ſhall we but trace him a little in ſome of the wonderful *Turns* of *Wiſdom* and Prudence made by him upon different Occaſions, what notable Conduct ſhall we obſerve. For,

When Preaching to the *Jews*, behold then the *Inſufficiency* of Circumciſion, and of all other legal Performances unto Salvation, is loudly proclaimed. But if he turn to the *Gentiles*,

Gentiles, and be called to preach at *Athens*, behold how quickly he is found acting the part of the *Philosopher*, appealing even unto their own Poets; in arguing solidly against their gross Idolatry and Superstition. And so also in Writing to the *Romans*, he improveth the very Light of Nature in condemning their abominable Immoralities.

And towards the Calling the *Gentile World* into the Church, behold how, having once paved his Way in the Epistle to the *Romans*, by holding out the great *Promises* of the Old Testament, respecting the *Messiah* and their Conversion by him; he next most wisely endeavoureth in the several Epistles to clear and prove, that this promised Christ, though crucified, yet was truly the *Wisdom* and *Power* of God to Salvation.

In short, who can possibly reflect on his *Sermon* and *Behaviour* before *Agrippa* and *Festus*, and not admire him? Behold the obliging Softness of his Introduction, the alluring Nature and Tendency of his Sermon. At once proving and commending Christianity, from the pleasant History of his miraculous Conversion: And when he observeth their Attention, how prudently, on the one Hand, doth he shun all *rudeness* in Application; and yet at the same time on the other, in a most solid Rhetorical Manner bringeth the Premisses close home, by *alledging* that

King

King *Agrippa* believed the Prophets. Upon which, underſtanding that he was become only *almoſt*, but not altogether a Chriſtian, behold what a wonderful return equally *Conſcientious* and *Complaiſant* doth he make unto him: Wiſhing to God that he and all preſent were ſuch, as he himſelf was, *Save theſe Bonds.*

To all which, if I ſhould ſubjoyn the great Meaſure of Holy *Prudence* and *Guile* he was endued with; whereby ſometimes he became *all Things* to all Men, and at other Times remarkably delivered himſelf from his contending Enemies, by crying out under ſome Circumſtances, that he was a *Roman*, and under others, that he was a *Phariſee*, the Son of a *Phariſee*, and that for the Hope and Reſurrection of the Dead, he was called in Queſtion: Who poſſibly, I ſay, can ſeriouſly reflect on all thoſe Things? And not preſently ſee the *manifold Qualifications*, which are ſo needful towards accompliſhing and adorning Miniſters of the Goſpel.

And therefore, 'tis hoped that ſome Modeſt Eſſay of this kind, reſpecting the Regulation of the *Matter* and *Method* of Goſpel Sermons, and holding out the *Serioufneſs* and *Wiſdom*, which ought to appear in the whole of Miniſterial Performances, will not be altogether unacceptable. More eſpecially, conſi-

conſidering how much at this Day, the *Senſe*, *Wit*, and *Learning* of the preſent Generation are moſt zealouſly ſet on Work, to find out all manner of Faults, firſt with the Principles and Precepts of the Goſpel, and next with the Method and Ways uſed in Sermons by the Publick Diſpenſers thereof.

And if from a regard to the great Number of Perſons entering, or more lately engaged with the Holy Miniſtry, there be ſome conſiderable Enlargements upon the *proper Matter*, as well as upon the Method of Goſpel Sermons, 'tis reaſonably expected, that the more judicious and experienced, will conſtruct charitably of this, as well deſigned. And while the following Diſcourſes frequently urge the Goſpel's being ſo preached, as to endeavour the bringing home of Truths *cloſe* to the Conſcience; it can never be reaſonably ſuppoſed, that I either mean, as if the convincing or renewing of Conſcience were in Miniſters Power; or as if any unſuitable ſolemnity in Expreſſion, were adviſed to be uſed in Preaching the Goſpel, but only a cloſe Reaſoning and Expoſtulating with the Hearers, and at Times appealing their own Knowledge and the Dictates of their Conſcience, in ſuch and ſuch important Points.

I would gladly alſo hope, that the ſerious Reader ſhall ſufficiently find that great Care hath been taken, to remember, that every Miniſter, can only Preach and Act *according to his Meaſure*, and that he who ſeriouſly improveth his Two Talents ſhall be as really reputed by his Lord, a faithful and wiſe Steward, as he who improved the Five: And that accordingly all ſuch ought to be had in great Eſteem amongſt Men.

And yet after all the Thoughts ſpent upon the following Subject, I cannot but ingenuouſly own, as in the greateſt Sincerity I do; that conſidering the *extraordinary Judgment* of ſuch a Venerable Aſſembly in relation to Books, it ſhould certainly have been a more *proportioned Author*, who ſhould have adventured on ſuch a Dedication.

But if either an High Veneration for the Church of *Scotland*, or a ſpecial Regard to the General Aſſembly thereof, or ſomething of a willing Mind to advance the Reputation and Succeſs of the glorious Goſpel, can make any Apology for the following Eſſay or the Dedication thereof; I ſhould be heartily ſorry, if there were not ſome Ground with the Author to plead them.

And tho' it be true, that there are already ſome uſeful Treatiſes looking this way, yet ſo far as I know, none of them have either

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ſo *complexly* conſidered the whole Heads relative to a right Miniſterial Diſpenſation of the Goſpel, or ſo *particularly* diſcourſed them, in relation thereto. And yet after all, 'tis fairly acknowledged that all that can be here pretended, is only *quoà in magnis voluiſſe ſat eſt.*

And finally, ſince all muſt own, that *Miniſters*, are either among the beſt or worſt of Men, and that they all ſtand obliged to ſuch Perſonal Qualifications, and to ſuch Publick Performances, as may juſtly proclaim them to be the *Meſſengers of the Churches and the Glory of Chriſt*; it ſeems to be but highly reaſonable, that now and then, there ſhould be ſome modeſt Repreſentation of this kind. Which if in the leaſt bleſſed of God, to the Advancement of the Intereſts of the Goſpel, and may any ways give occaſion to ſome great Lights, towards illuſtrating further ſuch an important Subject, it ſhall be accounted a great return of Grace unto the Author of the following Thoughts.

And now that a *gracious God* may for ever eſtabliſh what he hath ſo wonderfully wrought for our *Zion*, and ſo remarkably pour out of his Spirit from on high upon all his Servants, and allow ſo much of the Wiſdom which cometh down from above, as great Faithfulneſs and Diligence appear-

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ing in our Miniſterial Performances, and an unſhaken Stedfaſtneſs to our known Principles, together with an happy harmonious Procedure in our Judicatures; a Sovereign God who delighteth in Mercy, may yet ſay concerning his Church in our Land, this is *my Reſt* and here I will dwell; ſhall be thro' Grace, the ſerious and conſtant Prayer of,

Very Reverend and Honourable,

your Affectionate Brother and

Servant in the Lord,

Tho. Blackwell.

THE

THE

CONTENTS

OF THE

Three PARTS

OF THE

BOOK.

The First Part consisteth of Two Chapters, describing the Scriptural *Qualifications* of Ministers.

CHAP. I. *The Deity being* Love, *first calleth Man out of nothing, and next redeemeth him from the Depth of Sin and Misery. The Glory of Redemption-work being far greater than that of Creation,* Natural *Religion must quickly give way unto* Revealed. *Some unaccountable Discontent, inspiring atrocious Designs in some of the Angelical Breasts, and they proudly aspiring, are cast down from Heaven. In revenge*

revenge they attack and prevail upon aſpiring credulous Man; who falling, the Divine Wiſdom and Grace proclaimeth the great Myſtery of God in Chriſt. Which being the Deity's grand Contrivance, for diſplaying the Noble Perfections of the Divine Nature, and the glorious Actings of the Great Three in One, and withal being the Deity's firſt and laſt Project for accompliſhing the Salvation of loſt Man, the Revelation of it ſurely deſerveth to be termed the glorious and everlaſting Goſpel. A brief complex Scheme of which being conſider'd, 'tis evident that Perſons entruſted with the holy Miniſtry, ſtand obliged to the moſt ſerious and ſolemn Diſpenſation of ſuch great and important Truths, unto the Souls and Conſciences of the Children of Men. Page 1.

CHAP. II. *The Scriptural Qualifications of Goſpel Miniſters are deſcribed. The firſt remarkable Character of ſuch, is, that they ſhould be* Men of God, 1 Tim. 6. 11. *The import of this Character is particularly conſidered: Whereby, it is found that Church-men ſtand obliged above all others to be Men much like God, and Men greatly devoted unto God, and Men zealouſly concerned for God and the Intereſts of his Glory in their Generation. The Reaſons of all which, together with proper Directions, are particularly diſcourſed. The other great Character of Miniſters, is, that they ſhould be* Men of good Report, 1 *Tim.* 3. 7. *The Import of this being examined, and the Neceſſity of it towards the Succeſs of the Goſpel being cleared, the moſt proper and effectual Means for obtaining it, are declared.* Page 11.

The Second Part consisteth of Seven Chapters, declaring the right *Method* of Preaching.

CHAP. I. *That there are* unfaithful Ways *and* improper *Methods of Preaching the glorious Gospel, is sufficiently evident from the manifold heavy Charges against false Prophets and Teachers contained in the Book of God. These unfaithful Ways may be reduc'd to four Heads:* 1. *When Ministers are so exceeding* General *in preaching the Gospel, that it hath no manner of tendency to reach the Consciences of the Hearers. The several Ways Ministers may fall under this Charge, are condescended upon.* 2. *When the Dispensation of the Gospel is* absolutely Moral. 3. *When it principally consisteth of* smooth *things.* 4. *When Ministers preach themselves, and not Christ. The* Improper *Ways of Preaching the Gospel are these Five.* 1. *A* confused *indistinct Way, by reason of the irregular Disposition of Matter.* 2. *An empty* shallow *Way, consisting much in a Noise of Words, without any considerable Mixture of substantial Truths.* 3. *A* heterogeneous *Way, when the Subjects insisted on correspond not with the present Occasion.* 4. *An* affected vain-glorious *Way, Men aspiring after several things, most unsuitable unto the Purity and Simplicity of the Gospel.* 5. *A* precipitant *blundering Way, by reason of which the Preacher falls into a great many obvious Mistakes. All which improper Ways, considering the great Advance which Learning and Knowledge hath now made in the World, would, for the Honour of the Ministry, and the Reputation of the Gospel, be most carefully evited.* Page 28.

CHAP. II. *Several general* Directions, *towards the faithful and proper Dispensation of the Gospel. As,* 1. *That great Care be taken towards a prudent Choice of* proper *Subjects to insist upon.* 2. *That the* Method *used in handling the Subject, be adjusted unto the Nature and Scope thereof.* 3. *That all Things in the Expression and Utterance, tending most to Edification, be particularly consulted: Such as, Clearness, Pertinency, Gravity and Massiness in Diction and Dialect.* 4. *That in a special Manner, suitableness of Frame, becoming the Oracles of God, and proper to the great Import and Consequence of the Truths of the glorious Gospel, be much endeavoured in Preaching thereof.* 5. *That great closeness be studied in the applicatory Part of Sermons, towards the bringing home of Gospel Truths unto the Conscience. Towards a prudent Choice of Subjects, four Rules are to be observed. These Rules are all particularly discoursed. In treating of which, the various spiritual Conditions of Congregations are considered; together with the various Subjects, accordingly adjusted unto them. Solemn Days for Humiliation, and for Thanksgiving, together with Sacramental Occasions, deserve a special regard in the choice of Subjects. The Nature and Scope of Texts proper for such Solemnities, are particularly declared.* Page 46.

CHAP. III. *The* second general Direction *towards a faithful and proper Dispensation of the Gospel, is, that a* proper Method *be fallen upon, adjusted to the Nature and Scope of the Subject chosen. In discoursing this Head,* 1. *Some Considerations relative to* Method *in general are premised.* 2. *The several Methods of preaching the Gospel, to wit, the* Homiletical, Textual *and* Occasional, *are all proposed.* 3. *A Scheme by way of Sermon,*

mon, offered for the Illustration of the Homiletical Method. Page 59.

CHAP. IV. *The Preaching of* Christ *being the* Grand Design *of the Gospel; the commending of him,* 1. *To Believers, towards their rejoicing in their Choice, loving and glorifying him more and more: And,* 2. *To Unbelievers, towards compelling them to come in; must certainly be two great Pieces of a Gospel-Dispensation. Accordingly, in order to the close Application of the former explicatory Truths relative to our Lord, several* proper Topicks, *containing some of the most weighty Gospel-Motives for prevailing with Sinners to embrace Christ, are condescended upon. These* Motives *are particularly opened up in their Reasonableness and Import: The manifold* Directions *which might be insisted on upon such a Subject, are summed up unto two Heads.* Page 72.

CHAP. V. *A Sermon according to the* Textual Form *is offered, for the Illustration of that Method of Preaching. And in regard* distinct Notions *of Sincerity and Hypocrisie in Religion may be of considerable use in treating of many Gospel-Subjects; therefore those important Words contained* 2 Tim. 3. 5. *are insisted upon as the Foundation of the Sermon.* Page 91.

CHAP. VI. *The* Occasional Method *being discoursed, some Remarks are offered, relative to the peculiar Advantages of the several Methods proposed. Upon which ensueth the* Third *General Direction, respecting a* Suitableness *in Diction and Dialect unto a Gospel Dispensation. To which is subjoined the* Fourth *in relation to that Seriousness of Frame, which becometh Ministers in dispensing the* Oracles of God. Page 105.

CHAP. VII. *The* Applicatory Part *of Sermons, is a most material Branch of the Dispensation of the Gospel. Great Wisdom is necessary towards the right managing it. The Doctrinal Part is in a great Mea-*

ſure loſt, where there is not a cloſe and pertinent Application. The ſeveral Inferences *moſt uſual in Preaching, ſuch as, for Information, Confutation, Examination, Reproof, Conſolation and Exhortation, are all particularly conſidered. Their Nature, Scope, and ſuitable Improvement, are declared. In diſcourſing thoſe Heads, the ſeveral* wrong Meaſures *in applying Doctrinal Truths, to the great Prejudice of the glorious Goſpel, are clearly diſcovered. Such is the* Import *and* Conſequence *of a faithful and prudent Application of Goſpel Doctrines, as obligeth conſcientious Miniſters, to a ſerious Study and deep Concern in relation to the ſame. Such Miniſters will alſo endeavour a ſerious and cloſe Way of Lecturing; concerning the right Method of which, an* Appendix *is ſubjoined.* Page 117.

The Appendix *concerning the Right Method of* Lecturing. Page 135.

The Third Part conſiſteth of Six Chapters, holding forth the *Matter* of Goſpel-Doctrines.

CHAP. I. *The Goſpel contains a ſufficient* Treaſure *for rendring every Miniſter a* ready Scribe, *in the Things of the Kingdom of God. The Grand Ends and Deſigns of the glorious Goſpel are three; to wit,* 1. *The Converſion; and,* 2. *The Edification of the Elect; and,* 3. *The rendring unbelieving impenitent Sinners greatly inexcuſable. In Preaching to the Unconverted, both the* Malady *and the* Remedy, *would be moſt particularly declared. In opening up the former, the full* Import *of Man's lapſed Condition would be ſet in the greateſt Light.*

As,

As, 1. *The great Sinfulneſs of his Nature and Life.* 2. *The Depth of Miſery, into which he is fallen: And*, 3. *The abſolute Impotency he is under as to recovering himſelf. The proper and ſeveral Topicks conceived to be moſt adjuſted to the Preaching and holding forth the foreſaid Truths, are particularly condeſcended on.* Page 145.

CHAP. II. *The Lord Jeſus Chriſt being the only Remedy for fallen Man, the Law ought not to be preached without the Goſpel, leſt awaken'd Conſciences run to Extreams. In order to the Preaching Chriſt aright, a Scriptural-rational Account would be made of the Covenant of Redemption; as giving riſe to and making way for Salvation through him. In holding forth Chriſt, as the* proper Object *of ſaving juſtifying Faith, his wonderful Perſon, Natures and Offices would all be opened up; but eſpecially the* Hypoſtatical Union *ariſing therefrom, together with the neceſſary Grounds pleading for the ſame in Man's Redeemer. Our Lord's eſſential Divine Fulneſs, as laying Foundation for his Mediatorial All-ſufficiency, would be particularly declared. The running a demonſtrative rational Parallel between the Fulneſs and Abilities of the wonderful Perſon* God-Man, *and the whole ſuppoſable Wants, Plagues, Neceſſities and Deſires of poor needy Sinners, is a great part of Goſpel-Preaching. Miniſters who do not endeavour a moſt diſtinct, cloſe, and convincing Way, in holding out the* Fulneſs *and* Suitableneſs *of Chriſt unto loſt Sinners, but reſt in a general ſuperficial Deſcription, are in ſo far exceeding unfaithful to the Glorious Redeemer.* Page 172.

CHAP. III. *In Preaching the Goſpel aright, to the* Converted, *their various* Conditions *and* Exerciſes *would be particularly conſidered. In reſpect of which, Regenerate Perſons may be claſſed four Ways. Either*

Either, First, *As* Smoaking Flaxes, *in whom Grace is only beginning to appear in some sincere gracious Desires, and serious Essays God-ward.* Or, Secondly, *As more* advanced *and established Christians, having attained to more of the Assurance and Joy of believing. In dispensing the Gospel to the former, special Regard would be had, to the manifold weighty Objections, which often perplex their Spirits. These Objections being reduced to four Heads, are particularly considered and fully answered. With respect to the latter, the gradual Improvement of Grace, ought to be much pressed upon them. In order to which, several comprehensive Directions are condescended upon. The remaining Conditions of the Converted, are considered in the following Chapters.*

Page 193.

CHAP. IV. *The Third supposed Condition of the Converted, is that of their being* fallen from their first Love, *and not doing their first Works. In Preaching the Gospel to Believers in this Case, it seems proper,* 1. *That some clear Symptoms and Evidences of their spiritual Decay, should be condescended on, towards affecting and awakening Conscience.* 2. *The great Sin and Danger of such a Condition, would be next demonstrate, that so Conviction may issue in Contrition.* 3. *The Import of the Repentance or* second Conversion *proper for such Persons, would be opened up.* 4. *To set all the closer home (considering the great Influence of carnal Security) some most serious repeated Calls and Exhortations, enforced by the most weighty Promises and Threatnings, adjusted to such a Case, would be next improven. The proper* Scriptural Topicks, *for all those preceeding general Heads, are particularly declared. The Fourth supposed Condition of the Godly, is that of* Tryal *and* Affliction, *which oftentimes is inward and spiritual; consisting*

consisting either, 1. *In* Desertion; *or,* 2. *In Satanical* Temptations. *In Preaching the Gospel to the* deserted *complaining Believer, the following Method seems most promising. As,* 1. *That on the one hand, their Desertion may suitably affect the Soul; and on the other, old Love may be kindled afresh, to a withdrawn Christ, there would be some close Interrogatories about the Grounds of their Complaint.* 2. *They would be exhorted to serious self-searching, in order to their removing any Grounds of Provocation. Upon finding of which they would,* 3. *Be directed to a speedy Return and Reformation. But withall,* 4. *In case the Desertion be found to be more from* Sovereignty, *than Provocation (for clearing of which several Marks are condescended upon) then the deserted Believer is rather to be instructed and comforted, than reproved or discouraged.* Page 211.

CHAP. V. *The Second Branch of the Godly's Spiritual Trouble, is that of* Satanical Temptations. *The Nature of which is described. Satan in forming them, consults particularly the various Cases of the Godly. As,* 1. *When they are first moving Godward, and essaying to close with the Lord Jesus Christ; behold then, he insinuates, that insuperable Difficulties, both upon God's part and their own, lye in the way.* 2. *When the Work of Grace, is a little more advanced, behold then, the grand Temptation, of all's being* Delusions, *or at best, but a common Work of the Spirit, is greatly Improven by him. The Case of serious perplexed Souls, under such Temptations, calls for a special regard from the Gospel. The several Scriptural Topicks, adjusted to the clearing and removing the foresaid Temptations, are particularly condescended upon; together with the right Manner of their Application, in Preaching the Gospel.* Page 231.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI. *Besides the Temptations discourſed in the former Chapter, Satan hath yet more violent and* fiery Darts. *With theſe he attacks the more grown and eſtabliſhed Chriſtian. Sometimes by moſt* atheiſtical Suggeſtions, *deſigning thereby greatly to darken and confound the Soul, in its comfortable and eſtabliſhing Conceptions of God in Chriſt, and of the Divine Perfections. At other times, to encreaſe the Confuſion, and to fill the Soul with Horror, he forceth in a Throng and Noiſe of moſt* blaſphemous *Inſinuations, endeavouring to impreſs wrong and groſs Notions of the moſt glorious Objects, and of the greateſt Truths in Revealed Religion. Great Sympathy is owing from Miniſters to ſuch diſtreſſed Souls. In Preaching the Goſpel aright to them, ſeveral Rules would be obſerved: As* 1. *To clear from Scripture and other Inſtances, that their Caſe is not ſo ſingular and* extraordinary *as they ſuppoſe, and that a great deal of their ſuppoſed Guilt is more Satan's than theirs.* 2. *To ſhew that oftentimes, 'tis even the* talleſt Cedars *in Chriſt's* Lebanon, *upon whom thoſe high Winds of Temptations are let looſe.* 3. *To give ſome rational ſatisfying Account from Scripture of the holy, wiſe and good Ends, which God accompliſheth by ſuch Tryals.* 4. *Above all to endeavour to clear up their* Intereſt *in Chriſt, and in the well-ordered Covenant by ſeveral Evidences, which upon enquiry are to be found with them, even under their worſt Caſes. Some other very extraordinary Caſes in reſpect of Satanical Temptations, are diſcourſed, together with the proper ſcriptural Topicks fit to be improven towards the ſupporting and comforting of ſuch diſtreſſed and perplexed Souls.* Page 240.

ERRATA.

PAge 81. Line 6. for *opprobium* read *opprobrium*, p. 213, l. 30. dele *to*, p. 240. l. 13. dele *that*.

DIS-

DISCOURSES

CONCERNING

The Right Method

OF

PREACHING.

PART I.

CHAP. I.

The Deity being Love, *first calleth Man out of nothing, and next redeemeth him from the Depth of Sin and Misery. The Glory of Redemption-work being far greater than that of Creation,* Natural *Religion must quickly give way unto* Revealed. *Some unaccountable Discontent, inspiring atrocious Designs in some of the Angelical Breasts,*

and they proudly aspiring, are cast down from Heaven. In revenge they attack and prevail upon aspiring credulous Man; who falling, the Divine Wisdom and Grace proclaimeth the great Mystery of God in Christ. Which being the Deity's grand Contrivance, for displaying the Noble Perfections of the Divine Nature, and the glorious Actings of the Great Three in One, and withall being the Deity's first and last Project for accomplishing the Salvation of lost Man, the Revelation of it surely deserveth to be termed the Glorious and everlasting Gospel. A brief complex Scheme of which being consider'd, 'tis evident that Persons entrusted with the holy Ministry, stand obliged to the most serious and solemn Dispensation of such great and important Truths, unto the Souls and Consciences of the Children of Men.

THE Deity being *Love*, resolved from all Eternity upon some glorious Communications thereof, to Angels and Men; that so the infinitely excellent Divine Perfections, known at first only to God, might come also to appear conspicuously, unto some created intelligent rational Beings.

In order to which, Infinite Wisdom required, that the Glory of the Divine Attributes should, like the Sun, gradually arise and ascend unto its Meridian Altitude; that so its various Degrees might not only be the more adjusted unto the finite and limited Capacities of intelligent reflecting Crea-

Creatures, but alſo, that, by comparing one Degree of the Divine Procedure with another, the Perfection of every part, together with the glorious Compoſition of the whole, might infinitely redound to the Praiſe of the wonderful Author. Accordingly the Perfections proper for *Creation*, muſt precede thoſe adjuſted unto *Redemption*, and thoſe relative to Grace, muſt go before thoſe concerned in the Perfection of Glory.

All which having been from Eternity wonderfully projected in the Councils of Infinite Wiſdom, and Eternity being to give way to Time, the Almighty God, as the firſt glorious Inſtance of His great Wiſdom, Power, and Goodneſs, called forth out of nothing a higher and lower World, both which he nobly repleniſhed; the higher Houſe with Angels, and the lower with Men; and all this, as the laſt and conſummating Stroke from the Creating Perfections.

And thus ſtood the glorious Univerſe, in its original Glory and Perfection for ſome little time: The *inanimate* Parts themſelves, by their wonderful Beauty, Order and Harmony, conſpicuouſly proclaimed an inconceivable Wiſdom and Power; but wonderful *Man* ſtill more, by his being a noble Inſtance of the high Moral Perfections of the Deity: but above all, let us behold the moſt glorious Angels and Arch-Angels, thoſe pure Spirits about the Throne, by their tranſcendent Excellency in Wiſdom, Power and Holineſs, yet far more proclaiming the great Glory of the Creating Powers.

The Deity having thus accompliſhed both Worlds, and having beſtowed ſuitable Perfections upon Angels and Men, towards their anſwering fully the high Ends of their Creation; it was

thereupon, not necessary for the Creating Perfections to carry Matters any higher, more especially seeing now the two great intelligent *moral Heads* were perfected, and their whole inferiour Fellow-Creatures seen to be very good: So that in case any fatal Alteration should come, it was more than evident, that the Author of such great Goodness could never possibly have any iniquous Influence thereon.

The creating Attributes having been now so fully manifested, those relative to Redemption, as being yet *more excellent* than the former, waited as it were impatiently, for an Occasion of making a far more glorious Display. Accordingly the highest of the rational Beings, after all that Creating Power and Goodness had done, being, suitably to their created dependent Natures and Wills, still left in a State of Mutability, behold of a sudden, a most surprising *unaccountable Discontent*, is found inspiring some proud atrocious Designs in some of their Breasts; which quickly issued in the astonishing Apostacy and fatal Misery of Legions of sinning Angels.

These again, as incensed with the highest Enmity, Malice and Envy, and as being resolved to attack the Glory of the Deity in Heaven, by deforming and corrupting His glorious Image and High-Priest upon Earth, they first, by a most *subtile Paraphrase* upon the Nature and Design of the pleasant Fruit, and next, by a more cunning and bold turn upon the Truth of the Threatening, assured fallible Man, that his admired Knowledge and Conformity to God should infinitely advance by the Experiment of that *grand* and *forbidden Secret*: Which Proposal taking with aspiring Man, he, and in him, as the *Moral Head*, the whole of his Poste-

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rity of a ſudden fell into the Depth of Sin and Miſery.

Which *Fall*, at firſt view, ſeemingly reflecting upon the Wiſdom, Power and Goodneſs of Man's Creator, behold theſe Attributes, as being concerned in the Vindication of their own Glory, preſently erect a *Scene of Redemption*, infinitely more glorious than their higheſt Actings and Appearances in the Matter of Creation.

Accordingly, the eternal *Secret* of Redeeming Counſel is proclaimed, firſt by God Himſelf unto trembling Man in the Garden: This Revelation the Apoſtle moſt juſtly and remarkably termeth the *Glorious Goſpel*.

Which certainly muſt be ſuch, in reſpect of any Diſcoveries made by God unto Man in the Matter or Form of the firſt Covenant; as will moſt conſpicuouſly appear, if we conſider, that the Wiſdom, Power and Goodneſs, contriving, creating, and perfecting the Firſt *Adam*, are never once to be named, in compariſon with the Infinite Counſel, Glorious Power, and Incomprehenſible Love, which are demonſtrable in the wonderful Perſon, Death, Reſurrection, and Purchaſe of our Glorious Redeemer.

It was indeed great Wiſdom to contrive the Noble Human Soul, with its excellent Faculties and Powers, and to form the Majeſtick Countenance and Body of Man in its various Members; but to project the Hypoſtatical Union betwixt an infinite and finite Nature, and to conſtitute God and Man but one and the ſame Perſon, *God-Man*, required certainly a Depth of Thought only to be found with a *God*, and a Contrivance which could only ſpring from an Infinite Mind. The abſolute Impoſſibility, blaſphemous Boldneſs and Preſump-

tion, which at first view would have seem'd to have been in any Proposal of that kind, would have infallibly struck and confounded the most intelligent and penetrating Soul amongst Angels or Men. And hence, even those knowing Spirits, to whom the Foundation and Corner-stones of Nature were unvailed, are to this day bending down as it were their Heads, to study and pore into this great Mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God.

It must also be owned, that the creating the Soul out of nothing, and the Body out of the Dust of the Ground, was an Act of *great Power*; but if we speak of the extraordinary Conception of our Lord's Human Nature, together with its being personally united unto the Divine; and if to these we shall subjoin His *standing ground* as the Elect's Surety under all the agonizing Attacks upon Soul and Body, which He met with in the Garden, and upon the Cross, from God, Devils, and Men, and His triumphing over them all by a most glorious Resurrection; and finally, if we shall consider the Almighty Power and Virtue flowing from His Death, for the Regeneration, progressive and perfect Sanctification of dead and corrupted Sinners, it is clear, that a glorious Power is exerted and expressed in these, infinitely transcending the highest Acts of that Attribute in any of the Works of Creation.

And as to what concerneth creating *Love* and *Goodness*, it must indeed be acknowledged, that the bringing of Man from nothing unto such a Perfection of Holiness and Blessedness, was a Demonstration of exceeding great Favour and Bounty: but God so loving the World, as to give His Son to the cursed and ignominious Death of the Cross;

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and thereupon to pardon, ſanctify and glorify ſuch guilty, vile and monſtrous Creatures, muſt certainly imply a Love in the Deity, which to all Eternity ſhall ſurmount all Knowledge and Comprehenſion, *Epheſ.* 3. 19. and therefore, as was ſaid, ſurely Revealed Religion moſt juſtly deſerveth, when compared with Natural, to be called the *Glorious Goſpel.*

Briefly, if we conſider the Goſpel as the *firſt* and *laſt* Project * of the Deity, towards a compleat Diſplay of the Perfections of the Divine Nature and Will, and as the grand Mean for bringing about the Glory of the adorable Trinity, and as the only Contrivance for accompliſhing the Salvation of loſt Man; and withall, if we reflect, how ſoon Natural Religion behoved to give way unto Revealed, and that all *authentick Divine Revelation* was ſealed up, upon the Goſpel's Scheme being fully declared; and finally, if we conſider, that as the All-wiſe God hath entertained the World with this only Doctrine theſe Five Thouſand Years, ſo the Praiſe and Admiration of its Revelations are to ſpend Eternity; I ſay, who is it can ſeriouſly ponder theſe things? and not cry out, that the Goſpel muſt infallibly be a *Scheme of Doctrines* worthy of the deepeſt Thought and Meditation; deſerving alſo the moſt cordial Reception; and which juſtly pleadeth for the moſt ſerious and ſolemn Diſpenſation, which Men entruſted with the holy Miniſtry are capable of.

The Premiſſes having been diſcourſed, as an Introduction unto the right Method of preaching the Goſpel, it may not be improper, in the next

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* i. e. *The unalterable Diſpenſation.*

place, to subjoin some clear and comprehensive Scheme of the great substantial Doctrines contained therein; that so Ministers having a true Idea and Notion of these glorious Divine Counsels about Man's Redemption, may in the more distinct and succinct way and manner, deliver the same unto their People.

The *Sum* then of the Gospel, or Revealed Religion, may, according to the Scriptures, be reduced to the following Scheme.

As *first*, the *All-wise* God, to proclaim Himself the only Self-sufficient, Independent, and Immutable Being, with whom there is no Variableness nor Shadow of Turning, in the Depth of Wisdom permitted both Angels and Men to fall.

Secondly, That the Divine Redeeming Love might be seen to be absolutely soveraign and free, the sinning Angels (tho' originally the more glorious Order of the two) are wholly passed by, while sinful Dust and Ashes are wonderfully saved, *Heb.* 2. 16.

Thirdly, To give occasion to infinite Wisdom, Love and Power, to display themselves most gloriously, Man in his Fall is found in such deplorable Circumstances, as rendereth his Case absolutely desperate, unless such an *infinite Saviour* be found, as could perfectly repair the Divine Honour and Glory obscured and lost by Man's Sin.

Fourthly, This *adequate* Reparation cannot possibly be, till the threatned Death, contained in the Curse, towards the glorifying of the Divine Justice, Truth and Faithfulness, and the perfect Righteousness enjoined by the Precepts, towards the exalting the *spotless Holiness* and Equity of the Deity, should once both be accomplished.

Fifthly,

Fifthly, In order to such a perfect passive and active Obedience, as should thus fully repair the Divine Glory, there must of necessity be found an infinite Person capable to take away Sin by an *infinite Sacrifice*, and by a perfect Obedience to bring in an everlasting Righteousness; *Dan.* 9. 24.

Sixthly, Such an *infinite* Person cannot possibly be found amongst Angels or Men; yea, nor no where out of the Adorable Trinity, *Psal.* 40. 6, 7.

Seventhly, The Angelical and Human Minds being upon this confounded and nonplussed, infinite Wisdom and Love must contrive and accomplish the *Incarnation*, *Death* and *Resurrection* of the Son of God; *Psal.* 89. 19, 20.

Eighthly, This wonderful Person, *God-Man*; as the Elect's Surety suffering the Curse, and obeying the Precepts; Justice it self must own, that if God, with the Safety of all his Divine Perfections, could have bestowed Eternal Life upon the whole of the Human Race, upon the *First Adam*'s perfect Obedience, that then much more, considering the Infiniteness and Dignity of the Person, may He bestow the same upon the Redeemed Company, by reason of the compleat passive and active Obedience of our Glorious *Emanuel*, *Rom.* 5. 17.

Ninthly, The Contrivance of Redemption being the joint Counsel of the Trinity, and the *Father* from infinite Love giving the Son, and the *Son*, as moved by the same Spring, paying the Price of of our Redemption; infallibly the *Holy Ghost*, as being essentially the same God, concurreth with an equal Love in the effectual Application of the purchased Redemption, *John* 16. 8, 9, 10.

Tenthly, Man being naturally ignorant of the Mystery of God in Christ, and being also absolutely dead in Trespasses and Sins; therefore, a

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Gospel-Ministry to dispense the Word, Sacraments, and Prayer, as the outward Means on the one hand, and the *Holy Spirit* to regenerate and sanctify, as the principal efficient Cause on the other, must be set on work: 1 *Cor.* 3. 5, 6.

Eleventhly, The Glory of the Divine Majesty, the Honour of the Mediator, and the Reputation of the Divine Law, necessarily requiring that proud rebellious Man should be humbled, that guilty Man should know his Obligations to the Righteousness of another, and that disobedient Man should become holy; therefore, *sincere Repentance* towards God, sound *Faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ, together with a sincere universal *Practical Respect* unto the Divine Precepts, are always to be preached, as the grand necessary *Gospel-terms* and Prerequisites, in order to the obtaining the Accomplishment of the great Salvation: *Luke* 13. 3. *Mar.* 16. 16. *Heb.* 12. 14.

Twelfthly, Considering the great Importance and Consequence of the Doctrine of the Gospel, it being the great and manifold Wisdom of God, the Produce of the greatest Love, and the grand Mean for civilizing, converting and sanctifying a corrupt World; and all this towards the advancing the Glory of *Jehovah*, the Honour of the Redeemer, and the Salvation of Men: I say, considering these things, 'tis most evident, that if Men ought to be serious and solemn in any Office or Trust in the World, 'tis certainly in the Exercise of the holy Ministry, and in the Dispensation of the glorious Gospel: For, *Who is sufficient for these things?*

All which leading natively to consider, first the proper Qualifications of Gospel-Ministers, and next the right Method of preaching such important Truths, these Purposes shall accordingly be discoursed in the following Chapters. CHAP.

CHAP. II.

The Scriptural Qualifications of Gospel Ministers are described. The first remarkable Character of such, is, that they should be Men of God, 1 *Tim.* 6. 11. *The import of this Character is particularly considered: Whereby, it is found that Church-men stand obliged above all others to be Men much like God, and Men greatly devoted unto God, and Men zealously concerned for God and the Interests of his Glory in their Generation. The Reasons of all which, together with proper Directions, are particularly discoursed. The other great Character of Ministers, is, that they should be* Men of good report, 1 *Tim.* 3. 7. *The Import of this being examined, and the Necessity of it towards the success of the Gospel being cleared, the most proper and effectual means for obtaining it, are declared.*

AMongst the many Characters of the Ministers of the Gospel recorded in Scripture, that given by the Apostle *Paul* to *Timothy*, 1 Epist. 6. 11. *But thou O Man of God*, seems very much to deserve our serious Consideration: more especially, seeing it so clearly imports the great shining and exemplary Perfections which ought to be with all such: For, if *Men of God*, then surely of all Persons in the World, they stand obliged to be Men much like God, and Men habitually with God, and Men greatly for God in their Generation.

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But to discourse more particularly this notable and important Character, I take it clearly to point out these following Qualifications, as necessary unto every serious faithful Minister of the Gospel.

As *First*, If he must be a *Man of God*, then certainly he ought to be a Man greatly conformed in his Nature unto the Divine Image; having his Understanding enriched with the clear Knowledge of God, in the Truth of his Being; and with clear Views of the Glory and Excellency of the Divine Perfections; but especially with the Knowledge of the admirable Contrivance of the Divine Wisdom and Love in the glorious Person, Natures and Offices of our Redeemer. Besides all which, clear Notions of the great evil of Sin, and of the beauty and interest of Holiness, ought also to accomplish the Minds of such Men. For, Ministers being to be *the Light of the World*, Mat. 5. 14. If they are either ignorant or unsound in their Notions of the great *leading Truths* of the Gospel, whether such, as respect the glorious Excellencies of the Deity, or the wonderful Fulness and Suitableness of Christ, or relate unto the infinite evil of Sin and beauty of Holiness, 'tis impossible, but they must so far come short of the grand Design of that high teaching Office, as to be in hazard of becoming blind Guides, who shall lead both themselves and their People into outer Darkness.

Neither, will the clearest *speculative Views* of Gospel Truths, prove sufficient to make up Ministerial Knowledge: For, however Persons so endued may conceive, preach and write distinctly, and with *Judas* externally bear proportion with the Eleven, yet certain 'tis, 'till once a Mini-

Minister's Light become transforming and sanctifying of Heart and Life, he knows nothing in God's Account, *Luke* 12. 47. and therefore, till the *Will* also be renewed, and thereupon, a Church-man come so to know God as to love him above all, and so to know Christ, as cordially to embrace him as the Wisdom and Power of God to Salvation, and so to know the evil of Sin, as to hate every false way, and so to know the Perfection and Interest of Holiness, as sincerely to respect all God's Commandments, he is certainly, notwithstanding of all his Knowledge, and other great Gifts, but an empty sounding Brass and tinkling Cymbal, 1 *Cor.* 13. 1, 2, 3.

'Tis true, Speculative Knowledge may make a *good Head*, and pave the way for an eloquent Tongue, but as the precious Stone in the Toads Head doth never alter its poisonous Nature, so neither will distinct Thought and Conception be sufficient to form aright the *Heart* of any Man. The practical Language of all which, is to obtest all Persons engaging with the Holy Ministry, to endeavour to be able in some good Measure to say with the Apostle, 2 *Cor.* 4. 6. *For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our Hearts, to give the light of the Knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.*

Briefly, saving Knowledge being necessary to saving Faith, and Faith to Peace with God, as also towards Union and Communion with him; 'tis clear, that a Minister whose Soul is a stranger to saving Illumination, must at highest be only a *meer Reed* or *Trumpet*, thro' which the Gospel makes a Sound; which suppose it be never so regular and outwardly Charming, yet in the mean Time, the poor Preacher himself as having no just

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Sense of the Truths he is delivering, nor any solid Faith of them, nor Love unto them, can only resemble and act the part of the Sign at the Tavern, which while it invites Travellers to come in from the Storm, the poor Sign it self continues still open to the Wind and Rain: Or as the Apostle otherwise phraseth it, while they preach the Gospel to others they themselves are cast-aways, 1 *Cor.* 9. 27.

Secondly, This Phrase, of being a *Man of God*, clearly imports a Persons being in a special manner *devoted unto God*, and to the Interests and Concernments of his Glory in the World: So that it's amount is much like to that Expression of the Apostle, that *to him to live was Christ*, Phil. 1. 21. Accordingly Ministers ought to be Men devoted to God in many respects.

As *First*, The *Covenant of Levi* would be transacted betwixt God and them, *Mal.* 2. 4, 5. Which Transaction, not only importeth a Mans sincere acceptance of Christ upon the Terms of the Gospel in order to his own Salvation, but further his cordial acceptance of the Office of the Ministry, with all the Duties and Difficulties which may attend it, and that from Love to Christ. Thus *Paul* not only accepted Christ as his own Saviour, but as the glorious Lord, whose Gospel he would preach and stand by under all Tryals whatsoever, and of which he would never be ashamed, *Acts* 20. 24. *Rom.* 1. 16. And O what a promising Token for good were it, if all called Ministers of the Church of Christ, were indeed Men, who from clear Views of the reality of the Gospel, and of the wonderful Performances of the adorable Trinity in the Work of Mans Redemption, and of the infinite Obligations of a lost World unto God

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in Christ; I say, were the clear Views of these Things, together with an experimental Knowledge and Sense of the superlative Glory and Love of Christ, and of the worth of immortal Souls, the powerful complex Principle, constraining all such to engage with and hold on in the Work of the Gospel, what a rich and full Blessing from Heaven might be expected upon the Labours of such a Ministry? For, they being Pastors according to *God's own Heart*, the fulness of the Blessings of the Gospel might often come along with them, *Jer.* 3. 15.

Secondly, As Ministers would thus cordially devote themselves to God in the Work of the Ministry, so also towards proving themselves *Men of God*, they would give themselves intirely up to a *serious progressive Study* of the great Truths of the Gospel: And for this end, Reading, Meditation, Prayer, should have no small part of their Time, 1 *Tim.* 4. 13, 14, 15. The Minister who is by these means endeavouring to attain unto clearer Conceptions of the Invisible God, in the infinite glorious Excellencies of his Nature and Counsels of his Will, and pressing forward towards fuller discoveries of the wonderful Mediator, in the Hypostatical Union of the two Natures, and of the high important Ends and Designs thereof; the Minister who is closely studying the peculiar Excellencies of the New Covenant, the necessity of Regeneration, the Nature and Properties of the various Graces of the Spirit, and particularly the Difference betwixt the Essentials and meer Externals of Godliness.

I say the Minister who is thus seriously following on to know more and more of God, and of the Mysteries of the Kingdom, and that, with a

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design of becoming more capable to preach clearly, convincingly, and home to Conscience, as, he is one, who is in earnest a Man of God, devoting the Faculties and Powers of his Soul to the Concernments of the Divine Glory, so by stirring up the Gift of God thus in him, he lies fair and open unto the promised increase of greater Grace and Gifts from him, who hath for that end ascended up on high, *Psalm* 68. 18. *Math.* 13. 12.

Briefly, however at first view, it may seem but an ordinary Advice, to propose to Church-men to search diligently the Scriptures, yet upon second Thoughts, perhaps, it may come to be found, that there cannot be a more important and proper Direction given to Men of that Station. Yea certainly, a Man closely studying the Book of God in the use of proper Means, for finding out the genuine Import and Sense thereof, is in the most promising way for becoming an able Minister of the New Testament. For, as it was the want of this, which of old so much weakned and spoiled the Divinity of the learned *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, John 5. 39. So on the other hand, it was this, which made *Apollos* and *Timothy* such eminent Servants of Christ in the Work of the Gospel.

In the *Third Place*, Ministers, who would be Men of God, would next devote themselves to the serious Study of the *proper and close Methods* of opening up Gospel Truths to the Mind, and of bringing them home to the Consciences of their Hearers: For, it is certain, that the highest Degrees of Knowledge relative to the Matter of Gospel Doctrines, may be very much lost, by a confused Interpretation, and mismanaged Application. And therefore, as the Subjects of Gospel Ser-

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mons, will principally respect some of these *Four Heads*; either the Malady of Man's Sin and Misery, the Remedy provided in Christ, the right Way of improving this Remedy, or the great Interests of this Improvement: Together with the fatal Consequences of the neglect thereof; so it's evident,

That a *Minister* really intending to, be a polished Shaft and *Man of God*, would accordingly set his Soul, 1. To the Study of the most clear, lively, and affecting scriptural Accounts of Man's Sinfulness, Misery, and Impotency: That so (as far as close Preaching can go) he may describe the natural State so much to the Life, that his Hearers thereby may come solidly to believe, that such Doctrine is no Jest. 2. He would also endeavour such Advances in the Knowledge of the *glorious Emmanuel*, of the Wonderfulness of his Person, of the Divine and Mediatory Fulness therein, of the Suitableness of his Offices for all the Plagues, Wants and Desires which possibly can be with Sinners, and of the reasonable condescending Terms of Salvation, as to enable him to preach the Excellency and Perfection of the Remedy, with the clearest Evidence and Strength of Argument which can be desired. 3. *Faith* being the apprehending and applying Grace, how much ought every Minister to be a great Master in the Doctrine relative thereunto? That so he may be able to set it forth in its Author, in its Objects more mediate and immediate, in its assenting, consenting, depending and improving Acts, in its inseparable sanctifying Properties and Effects, when of a sound and saving Kind. 4. The clear and full scriptural Accounts of the *great Salvation* on the one Hand, and of the *dreadful Wrath* to

come on the other, would also be so accurately studied, as a Minister might as it were be in case, sometimes to make his Pulpit the Mount of Transfiguration, in displaying the unsearchable Riches of Christ, and the eternal weight of Glory in due Time to be revealed; as at other Times, to make it Mount *Sinai*, by a solid, grave Proclamation in the Name of the Lord, of the Curses and Plagues written in the Book of God against unbelieving, impenitent Sinners. And thus a Minister shall be found, to be the ready Scribe well instructed in the Things of the Kingdom, *Mat.* 13. 52. But being in the sequel of this Treatise, to discourse at considerable length, how all those different general Heads are particularly to be opened up and applied in Preaching the Gospel, I shall not enlarge farther upon them in this Place.

Thirdly, The next Import of Ministers being *Men of God*, I conceive, may respect the great *Gravity*, *Authority*, *Seriousness*, and *Liveliness*, which in their Sermons ought to adorn them as Ambassadors of Christ. And seeing the Holy Ghost calleth them by no lower Name, than the Messengers of the Churches, and the Glory of Christ, 2 *Cor.* 8. 23. I am confident, they stand highly obliged in all their publick Appearances, to proclaim so much to the World.

And therefore, towards attaining unto those adorning Dispositions and Frames; as studying to preach Christ and not themselves, as Diligence and Accuracy in private Meditations, leaving no room for Confusion in Publick, as a serious remembrance of the great Actings of the adorable Trinity in Man's Redemption, together with a solid Belief of the inconceiveable worth of immortal

mortal Souls; I say, as these Things will invite the Holy Ghost, and lay the Soul of the Preacher much open unto the influences of Light and Life, so these again actuating the several Graces, and thereby enlarging the Powers of the Soul, the whole Man shall come to be nobly set a going in publick Ministerial Performances. Accordingly, we find the Disciples were commanded to tarry at *Jerusalem*, till they should receive the Spirit from on high, *Luke* 24. 49. Which, when they had received, they were indeed taken notice of as *Men of God*, and as Persons who had been with Jesus.

And though it be very true, that Ministers cannot now expect any such extraordinary Effusion of the Spirit, yet we may be fully satisfied, that such Men as set themselves to walk closely with God, and are deeply concerned (from a sincere respect to the Glory of Christ) for a serious and lively Frame of Soul in preaching the Gospel, they are in the true way, to have their Spirits so richly enditing good Matter, as their Tongues shall become like the Pen of a ready Writer, *Psalm* 45. 1. & 115. 32. *John* 14. 19. To all which I shall only subjoin, that however, it must still be granted that it is only the Holy Ghost, and not the Ministers Frame which can either convert or edifie one Soul, yet at the same Time it's equally undeniable, that the Effects of a serious and lively Dispensation, differ vastly from those of a dead and formal Kind: For, under the former, behold! What close Attention, what Thoughtfulness, what Complacency, not to speak of the manifold Convictions, warm Motions, and promising Resolutions, which often accompany, by the common Influence of the Spirit, such Ser-

mons; whereas, under the latter, behold! What wandering, slumbering, unconcernedness, and wearying of the Gospel, as if the Congregation were rather in a Prison, than in the amiable Courts of God's Grace.

And as to what concerneth different Men, their differing vastly, in the Expression of their serious and lively Frames, (some of the most worthy Men making little noise) it makes nothing against this, for still where Seriousness and Liveliness is of the genuin Kind, it will generally bring such an Evidence along with it self, as will in less or in more impress the Hearers, and bear witness for God and his Ambassadors. And therefore, to shut up this Head, I shall only bring to mind an Account, which was once brought from a Minister's Closet, by one who was sent to call him to the Pulpit, to wit, that he was as it were seriously protesting, he could not go unless God would go with him, *Exod.* 33. 15.

Fourthly, The last import of the Character of Ministers being *Men of God*, I take to be, that they ought *practically to commend God and Godliness greatly to the World*. So much the plain Antithesis in the Text clearly confirms – *But O, thou Man of God, flee those things: And follow after Righteousness, Godliness, Faith, Love, Patience, and Meekness*, 1 Tim. 6. 11. As if the Apostle had said, whatever other Men do, you stand solemnly obliged to a convincing and exemplary course of Holiness.

It hath been often told the World, that Men judge Things fully more by the Eye than by the Ear, and consequently that Minister's Practice is as much regarded, if not more than their Sermons. So that it's evident, that suppose in the Pulpit they should resemble Holy Angels, yet if in Con-

Converſation they be found but very ordinary, carnal Men, 'tis not a thouſand elaborate Diſcourſes, which will ever be able either ſolidly to impreſs their Hearers with the Faith of reality in Religion, or any Ways engage their Souls practically to fall in Love with the ſame. If the *Jews* were ſo inveterately ſtumbled, at our Lord (and that notwithſtanding all his Miracles) upon meer Allegiances and for meer Trifles, as neglecting ſome of their fooliſh and vain Traditions, what will a wicked and cenſorious Generation be? When they have real and ſolid Grounds from Men, who can ſubjoin no other Seal, of the Divinity of their Doctrine, but their own Perſonal Conformity unto it.

And therefore, Miniſters towards proving themſelves *Men of God*, would from the *Cloſet* to the *Pulpit*, I mean from the moſt private to the moſt publick Pieces of Converſation, practically evidence the Reality and Power of true Godlineſs; that ſo, while the World is a conſtant witneſs unto their Piety towards God, their Sobriety towards themſelves, and their Righteouſneſs towards their Neighbours, they may come to be firmly perſwaded of the great Reality and Power of the two noble Principles of ſerious Religion; to wit, the Love and Fear of God. Thus it was *John*'s walking as he preached, which made even a *wicked Herod*, greatly to regard him, and to do many Things in obedience to the Goſpel, *Mark* 6. 20. *Briefly*, ſeeing that any conſiderable Offence given by a Miniſter, is a ſtroke drawn at Chriſt, and proves a deep Wound unto Religion, and which hardly any after-Reformation can ſufficiently retrieve, it might juſtly be expected, that all Men of that Character, from Conſcience

of Duty and Sense of Interest, would most seriously endeavour to be ensamples unto the Flock, 1 *Pet.* 5. 3.

Having now considered *Ministers*, as Persons who stand obliged in the Divine Account to be *Men of God*, and that above all others in the World, it may not be improper to consider them next as standing obliged (according to the Apostles special Direction, 1 *Tim.* 3. 7.) to be *Men of good report*. Which remarkable Epithet, as it points out the good Character and Reputation proper for Men, before they be called to engage in the Holy Ministry, so upon the same strength of Reason, it clearly imports the necessity of their managing themselves so conscientiously and prudently in the whole of their Way and Deportment, as they may advance their Reputation more and more among Men. For, as even the *Sun* himself, is not much noticed or valued in a dark and cloudy Day, so if Church men gain not Reputation among their Hearers, but by Unfaithfulness, Sloath, Impertinencies, and Imprudent Conduct, render themselves mean and contemptible, 'tis impossible, that the highest Pulpit Gifts that Men are capable of, can ever make considerable Impressions to advantage amongst their People. Yea, any one Cloud darkning to any Degree, either a Minister's Conscience or Prudence, is in no small hazard to blur and spot a thousand of the most excellent Sermons.

'Tis true, that the most faithful and prudent Men, may very often be most liable to the hard Words and Reproaches of a wicked Generation, which made our Lord pronounce a Wo against Ministers, of whom all Men speak well, but still it will at the same Time hold good, that as such Men have

a ſecret Teſtimony in the Conſciences of thoſe who detract them, ſo on the other Hand, even thoſe Miniſters who by reaſon of their ſinful Laxneſs and Compliances, may be better ſpoken of amongſt evil Men, yet, at the bottom under thoſe verbal Commendations, there ſhall be found a ſecret Diſ-eſteem and Contempt, accounting ſuch Perſons, meer mercenary Tools, and naughty Souls in the Miniſtry. And therefore, I know no ſort of Men in the World, ſo much obliged to ponder ſeriouſly thoſe Words of *Solomon*, Eccl. 10. 1. than what Miniſters are. *Dead flies cauſe the ointment of the Apothecaries to ſend forth a ſtinking ſavour: So doth a little folly him that is in Reputation for Wiſdom and Honour.*

Theſe Things being premiſed, it will probably be now expected, that the moſt proper and effectual Ways, for obtaining this good Report, ſo neceſſary to the Succeſs of the Goſpel, ſhould be next diſcourſed. And accordingly, I ſhall humbly offer theſe following Advices.

As *Firſt*, That great Care be taken of a *pure and ſingle Entry* into the Holy Miniſtry: That ſo a Man getting in by true Merit, and a clear providential Call orderly conveyed unto him by the Church, there may be no laſting ground given for reproaching him with baſe mercenary Ways and Simoniacal Tricks and Pactions, which would for ever make him abominable to God, and mean in the Eyes of all good Men. For, certain 'tis, where Love to filthy Lucre is the predominant Motive in engaging with the Work of the Goſpel, as neither the Glory of God, nor the Salvation of immortal Souls, can be much upon the Heart of ſuch a Man, ſo his baſe worldly ſelfiſh and naughty Ends, ſhall be daily appearing more

and more, till at length he shall be accounted a meer Earth-worm and sucking Leech, and nothing else: And if restraining Grace prevent not, he is in hazard of becoming upon very small Temptations, the greatest of Apostates and worst of Men, 2 *Tim.* 4. 10.

Secondly, Diligence and Faithfulness in Ministerial Duties, wonderfully advanceth Churchmen's Reputation. For, when their Sermons are to Conviction, the Produce of serious and accurate Study, when their Catechizings are frequent, and respect the great important Truths of Religion, when their Admissions to the Table of the Lord are with an Evidence of great Conscientiousness, when their Discipline is attended with great Impartiality, when their solemn Sacramental Occasions are adorned with massy pertinent Subjects and great Liveliness of Frame, when their Visitation of the Sick is not meer Complement, but performed with a due Scriptural Regard to Men's State and Conversation; speaking Peace only to the Godly, and warning the wicked Man of his Sin and Danger, without Regeneration, sound Faith, and sincere Repentance; I say, where these Things concur in a Minister's Management amongst his Flock, 'tis impossible for Satan himself to delete the secret and great Testimony, which such a Man shall gain from the Hearts and Mouths of his People. And at a parting Hour in some measure he shall be prepared with *Moses* and *Paul*, to call Heaven and Earth to witness, that he was faithful in the Church of God, and is innocent from the Blood of Souls; and thereupon shall enter into the Joy of his Lord, *Deut.* 30. 19. *Acts.* 20. 26, 27.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, A prudent *Conduct* and *Management*, even in *leſſer* and more *ordinary* Pieces of Converſation, doth not a little advance and eſtabliſh a Miniſter's Reputation: Such as a due civil Reſpect to the different Qualities of Perſons they may be concerned in, being courteous and obliging to all, ſo far as a good Conſcience will allow. So likewiſe great Candor and Ingenuity in Converſation, together with a prudent healing Temper, endeavouring timouſly to prevent Differences, and by ſeaſonable private Admonitions reſtraining ſeveral Offences from breaking out into publick Scandals: Theſe I ſay, and ſuch like Endeavours, can never fail of begetting very good and reſpectful Impreſſions of a Miniſter's Conduct, in the Minds of all Ranks of Perſons he ſhall have at any time to do with. All which Directions are ſo frequently and fully expreſſed in the Scriptures, that I need not further enlarge in proving them. Any who will conſult *Jer.* 23. 22. 1 *Cor.* 9. 20, 21, 22. 1 *Pet.* 3. 8. will find the Holy Ghoſt hath been very particular this way, ſhewing, that as Miniſters on the one hand ought to be ſo faithful to God, as to complement no Man on Earth with their Conſcience; ſo on the other (that being kept pure) they ſtand concerned in the moſt prudent obliging way to become all things to all Men, that ſo they may gain ſome.

In ſhort, the *Amount* of the whole of the Premiſſes is, that Miniſters ought to be regenerate Perſons, having their own Hearts renewed, and ſhaped out by the Power of Grace for God and true Godlineſs; otherwiſe, they can only but at moſt talk of Religion: as alſo, that they ought to be Perſons having ſuch a great Eſtimate of Chriſt, as the Wiſdom and Power of God for Salvation, and

and such a Concern for his Glory and the Good of precious Souls, as not only will determine a personal embracing of the glorious Redeemer, but also a cordial zealous Offer of themselves and their All towards making Him great, and His Name to be remembred in the Church: and further, that hereupon, they ought to be Men mighty in the Scriptures, abounding with the Knowledge of all Gospel Truths, which when they have rightly methodized, prudently consulting the Condition and Capacity of their Hearers, they ought to deliver with so much of Concern and of spiritual Sprightliness and Vigour, as becometh the Embassadors of the Great God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And to commend their more publick and Ministerial Performances, as an exact practical Confirmation of their Doctrine by a personal holy and blameless Walk, is absolutely necessary; so also a prudent Management and Conduct, in the whole of their civil Conversation, will tend not a little towards the Success of the Gospel. As a proof of all which the Apostle *Paul* gives us a most notable Description of his Preparation for the Ministry, *Gal.* 1. 15, 16. *But when it pleased God, who separated me from my Mother's Womb, and called me by his Grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Heathen, immediately I conferred not with Flesh and Blood.* In which Words we find that he was first effectually called by Grace, having Christ revealed in him, and that then he was so much Christ's, and for the Interests of the Gospel, that no Considerations could detain him. And as to what concerneth the prudential part, it's abundantly notorious, how much an obliging Mixture of Conscience and Courteousness, in the whole of his way, did

did produce a wonderful holy Guile, gaining greatly upon the many different Qualities of Persons he was called unto. In fine, it is long since our Lord, by way of special direction to all His Ministers to the End of the World, told his Disciples, to *be wise as Serpents, and harmless as Doves.*

DIS-

DISCOURSES
CONCERNING
The Right Method
OF
PREACHING.

PART II.

CHAP. I.

That there are unfaithful Ways *and improper Methods of Preaching the Glorious Gospel, is sufficiently evident from the manifold heavy Charges against false Prophets and Teachers contained in the Book of God. These unfaithful Ways may be reduc'd to four Heads:* 1. *When Ministers are so exceeding* general *in preaching the Gospel, that it hath*

no manner of tendency to reach the Consciences of the Hearers. The several Ways Ministers may fall under this Charge, are condescended upon. 2. *When the Dispensation of the Gospel is* absolutely Moral. 3. *When it principally consisteth of* smooth *things.* 4. *When Ministers preach themselves, and not Christ. The Improper Ways of Preaching the Gospel are these Five.* 1. *A confused indistinct Way, by reason of the irregular Disposition of Matter.* 2. *An empty* shallow *Way, consisting much in a Noise of Words, without any considerable Mixture of substantial Truths.* 3. *A* heterogeneous *Way, when the Subjects insisted on correspond not with the present Occasion.* 4. *An* affected vain-glorious *Way, Men aspiring after several things, most unsuitable unto the Purity and Simplicity of the Gospel.* 5. *A* precipitant *blundering Way, by reason of which the Preacher falls into a great many obvious Mistakes. All which improper Ways, considering the great Advance which Learning and Knowledge hath now made in the World, would, for the Honour of the Ministry, and the Reputation of the Gospel, be most carefully evited.*

THAT there may be great *Unfaithfulness* in preaching the Glorious Gospel, is so evident from the gross Accusations laid against the false Prophets in the Old Testament, and

and against the false Teachers in the New, that there is no room left for doubting in this matter: *Ezek.* 13 9, 10. *Jer.* 23. 31, 32. & 29. 9. 2 *Pet.* 2. 1. 1 *John* 4. 1. And therefore as all Unfaithfulness, but more especially in such a great Trust, is undoubtedly amongst the greatest of Crimes; so it must certainly be very much all Ministers Interest to understand wherein this Unfaithfulness in dispensing the Gospel doth really consist.

To clear which, there are these *four Ways*, by which Ministers may fall under this heavy Charge: As, 1. When they are exceeding *general* in preaching the great important Truths of the Gospel; delivering them in such general Terms, as hath no manner of tendency to reach in the least the Consciences of their Hearers: and that because the whole Sermon consists only of some Collection of general Truths.

And this falls out in the following cases; as 1. When the principal Truths, which both Text and Doctrine obliges a Minister to insist upon, are only generally expressed, without any particular Explication of the Import of the same. As when a Minister, who by his Text stands obliged clearly to open the *Nature* and *Properties* either of Regeneration, Faith, Repentance, or true Holiness, in order to his Hearers being well informed, that so they may accordingly practise: yet behold, instead of doing so, he perhaps only holds, in some general Assertions, of their being Duties commanded, and of their Necessity in order to Salvation; and runs out in several Commendations of them, as having many Promises annexed unto them; or makes some Collections of this and the other Saying of the Fathers about them; but all this while leaves the Hearers absolutely Strangers unto

unto the *true ſcriptural Import* and eſſential Ingredients of the foreſaid great Goſpel Graces and Duties: So that, when Sermon is ended, they have no more diſtinct Notions what to ſet about, or how to perform them, than when it did begin. Which ſurely is a way of preaching the Goſpel promiſing very little (even as a Mean) towards opening the Eyes of the Blind; and which is far from what Miniſters ought to do, *Job* 33. 23. *If there be a Meſſenger with him, an Interpreter, one among a thouſand, to ſhew a Man his Uprightneſs.*

2*dly.* A Miniſter may alſo be ſaid to be *too general*, when in the Courſe of his Sermons he only explains the Truths of the Goſpel, but doth no ways apply the ſame, endeavouring to bring them cloſe home to Conſcience; and that, either by way of Information, Examination, Reproof, Conſolation, or Exhortation, according to the different Nature and Scope of the Doctrine he is inſiſting upon. And thus, how many great and good Explications do often fall to the Ground; which muſt certainly be a great Loſs unto Conſcience; as when a Miniſter hath, by way of Explication, given a conſiderable account of the glorious Redeemer in his Perſon, Nature and Offices, and of the Nature of Faith in him; or perhaps hath cleared up the Nature of Regeneration, Juſtification, or Sanctification; but withal finiſheth theſe Subjects without applying the ſaid Truths, by ſhewing particularly the practical Voice and Language of the ſame, both to Believers and Unbelievers. Or if there was any applicatory Sentence or two, it was ſuch as neither deſcribed particularly the Perſons to whom it did belong; nor yet had any tendency, becauſe of the want of Motives and Directions either to touch the Heart

or

or influence the Life and Conversation. Which is a Method of Preaching quite contrary unto the great Design of the Holy Scriptures, and of the Apostles Direction to *Timothy*, 2 Epist. ch. 3. v. 16. *All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness.*

3*dly*. They also must in part fall under this Charge of being *too general* in preaching the Gospel, who in giving Marks of any Grace, or of an Interest in Christ, or in giving Directions towards obtaining the same, doth neither express nor explain the said Marks and Directions so particularly, as to answer the Design of either. As when a Minister, in giving a Mark of true Faith, tells, that it works by Love; and again, in giving a Mark of Love, tells, that such keep the Commandments: but withall neither opens up the Nature of Love, as importing a superlative Esteem, Desire, Delight, and Gratitude in it, nor yet cleareth the Import of true Obedience, as being sincere, cordial, and universal. And so likewise in giving Directions perhaps towards obtaining an Interest in Christ, he presseth to search the Scriptures, to pray, to deny our own Righteousness, and to trust to Christ: but all this without ever clearing in the least, how the Soul must solidly assent unto the Truth and Certainty of the Gospel-reports of Man's Sin, Misery, and Impotence by Nature, and of Christ's Fulness, Suitableness, and Willingness: and how there must also be a cordial Consent unto a whole Christ, the Soul chusing him in all his Offices, and upon the account of the same, relying upon him as a compleat Saviour, able to bring about their Salvation. Which surely is a way of preaching Marks and Directions, after which

which the Hearers may in a great measure be as far from knowing their State, or how to rectify the same, as before they heard them delivered.

And therefore as nothing is more unsuitable unto the glorious Gospel-Trumpet, than thus to make an *uncertain Sound*, I shall presume to offer these two Remarks upon this *general Way* of preaching the Gospel. The *first* is, That in a great measure it robs the Gospel of that which is a great part of its Glory, to wit, its being as a *two-edged Sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of Soul and Spirit*, *Heb.* 4. 12. Which certainly it can never be, while it only makes a Sound of Words in the Ear; or at most, entertains the Mind with some speculative Notions of general Truths; but never comes nearer, so as to lay (as it were) Siege unto the Conscience, obliging it (so far as close Preaching and Reasoning can go) either to hearken and obtemperate, or otherwise become most uneasy, by reason of pungent Convictions, *Acts* 24. 25. The 2*d* Remark is, that, as it very much spoils the Gospel of its Glory, so it also tends much to disappoint it of one of its great Designs, which we are told by our Lord, is, *to compel Sinners to come in*, Luke 14. 23. Now tho' the closest Gospel-Sermons and Reasonings, that possibly Man or Angel could dispense, can never without an Almighty Divine converting Power, determine the Heart of any Man to turn from Sin unto God, by a cordial embracing of the Lord Jesus Christ; yet if we speak of the Gospel (in its own Sphere) as a Mean, then certainly the particular close Preaching of it hath by far the advantage of the general overly way of dispensing the same. For tho' it can neither savingly illuminate the Mind, nor renew the Will, yet under the influence of the

common Motions of the Spirit, it may beget such Convictions of Sin, Fears of Wrath, warm Motions and Resolutions God-ward, together with such temporary Reformations, as it may be said of the Hearers, what Christ said of the discreet Scribe, *Mark* 12. 34. *Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God.*

Whereas on the other hand, a general superficial Way of preaching the Gospel, allows all sorts of Hearers carnal Ease and Security; no ways alarming the Prophane, nor discovering the Unsoundness of the Hypocrite, nor stirring up the slothful and decayed Christian. And therefore considering the Import of the foresaid Command of our Lord's, *to compel* Sinners to come in; it must certainly still be Ministers Duty (according to their Measure) by the cleerest and closest Gospel-Sermons and Arguments, to strive with their Hearers, and that whether a Sovereign God condescend or not, to strive with them by his Spirit. *In fine*, Ministers are always to stir up the Gift of God in them, 2 *Tim.* 1. 6. Neither can it be easily supposed, that a Minister of any Life or Spirit, and who knows any thing of the Constraint of the Love of Christ, could easily bear to have his Hearers after Sermon replying unto him, as *Job* to his Friends of old, upon their discoursing him and his Case in such general and remote terms, *chap.* 6. 25. *How forcible are right Words! but what doth your arguing reprove?* And therefore tho' Particularity and Closeness cannot be obtained in every Sermon, yet it should certainly be much endeavoured in the Course of a Gospel-Dispensation.

The *second unfaithful Way* of preaching the Glorious Gospel, is, when the Dispensation of it is *absolutely moral*, and no more. So that abstract

from

from these *Four*; to wit, decrying of Vice and Immoralities; and 2. commending the opposite Virtues and moral Duties; and 3. accordingly explaining the Law only by the Letter thereof, and as reaching the outward Conversation; or 4. at most exhorting unto the Externals of true Religion, such as Head-Knowledge, Reading, Prayer, Attendance upon the Ordinances, communicating, and the like: I say, when the Gospel is thus preached, and goes no further, no ways clearing up the Nature and Necessity of the Essentials of Religion, in order to Salvation; surely there must be great Unfaithfulness here: For till the Gospel open up the *Import* and *Necessity* of saving Knowledge, sound Faith, sincere Repentance, and of true Gospel-Holiness; how is it possible that Sinners, naturally blind, can ever clearly see the difference betwixt true Godliness issuing in Salvation, and the dead Form thereof, which will infallibly at the long run disappoint the foolish Virgins, when the Bridegroom cometh? *Matth.* 25. 9, 10. It was this way of preaching, for which our Lord so heavily attacked the Jewish Doctors and Scribes of old; spending a whole Sermon in confuting this unaccountable way of their interpreting the Law; concluding, that the Blind led the Blind, and that they should both fall in the Ditch, *Matth.* 5. 20, to 48. and 23, 24, to 34.

A *Third unfaithful Way* of preaching the Gospel is, when the Dispensation of it consisteth greatly of *smooth things*; so that the Hearers are only entertained with these three Heads: As, 1. Daily Accounts of the Divine Goodness and Mercy, holding out the Deity, as if he were absolutely Mercy and Grace; and that without ever so much as once mentioning his essential Holiness and per-

fect Justice. 2. Christ's Satisfaction preached in such extensive, ambiguous and indefinite Terms, and without any due scriptural Qualifications of the Persons who can actually receive Justification thereby, that the whole Hearers promiscuously are made to conceive false Hopes of Salvation. 3. If Sin at any time be insisted upon and reproved, it is only the *more gross* external Acts that are complained of; but the *secret Heart Ways* of sinning against the Law, and of despising the Gospel, are not particularly laid open: Such as habitual Forgetfulness of God, mean, low Thoughts of the Lord Jesus Christ, quenching of the Spirit, a secret Enmity against the Strictness and Spirituality of the Law, and living habitually in the Love and Practice of some secret known Sin. When thus the Gospel preacheth only *smooth things*, which no ways tend to discover unto People how Matters really are betwixt God and them; or to shew them either their Sin or Danger; or *briefly*, when all Explications, Applications and Reproofs, are so managed, as Conscience can no ways be reached, but on the contrary, the whole of the Hearers allowed to possess their carnal Ease and Peace, tho' many of them be living in Sin, and absolute Strangers to Christ and serious Godliness; then certainly the Gospel may be said to be misimproved and mismanaged to a degree.

Accordingly we find the Lord charging it upon the *Jews* of old, as a piece of great Guilt, and as an Evidence of their great Boldness and Impudence in sinning; that they cryed unto their Prophets, to prophesy smooth things unto them, and not to speak of God, as the Holy One of *Israel*, but to speak soft Words, *Isa.* 30. 10, 11. As on the other hand we find the Lord threatning the Prophets,

phets, who thus use their Tongues, meaning, smoothing them, to the perverting the glorious, convincing, alarming and converting Designs of the Gospel, *Jer.* 23. 29, 31. And how deeply the Lord resents this Method, is also most clear from the 15*th*, 16*th*, and 17*th* Verses of the same Chapter. And finally, as 'tis evident, that such a way doth not argue any clear powerful Impressions, either of the glorious Majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose Name the Gospel is preached, or of the great Worth of immortal Souls; so certainly it cannot fail in the Day of Accounts, to cause the Blood of Souls in a great measure to be charged upon the Heads of such unfaithful Watchmen, *Ezek.* 3. 18. *When I say unto the Wicked, thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the Wicked from his wicked Way, to save his Life, the same wicked Man shall die in his Iniquity; but his Blood will I require at thine Hand.*

A *Fourth unfaithful Manner* of preaching the glorious Gospel, is that of a *carnal selfish Way*; when Ministers preach not Christ, but themselves. And of this great Treachery and Unfaithfulness, Men may be several ways guilty: As, 1. When their principal View and End in engaging in the Ministry is really worldly Gain; so that nothing of Love to Christ, or an eye to his Glory, so much moved them to enter that Station, as what to gain Money, and some measure of worldly Reputation, 2 *Cor.* 4. 5. 2. When the great necessary Doctrines and Truths of the Gospel, which evidently tend to Conversion and Edification, are much laid aside, and other Subjects, together with peculiar Methods of handling the same, are designedly chosen, which have no tendency that way; but are rather adjusted to the shewing of Mens Gifts

and Abilities, towards the procuring Human Applause; then certainly Men preach themselves, and not Christ, 1 *Cor.* 2. 2, 4. 3. When under any Resentment or Disobligation, Mens Passions so far overcome them, as to cause them to contrive such and such Notes of the Sermon towards reaching some one groundless Reflection or other upon the Persons they are offended at: Which Practice, as 'tis certainly a most humourous and ungenerous way of preaching the Gospel; so more especially when these Reflections are designed against serious godly Persons, terming perhaps their Religion Hypocrisy, and their real Tenderness morose Nicety, and what not? And thus with the false Prophets and Idol-Shepherds of old, wounding their Hearts, whom the Lord would not have made sorrowful, *Ezek.* 13. 22. *John* 12. 4, 5, 6.

Which *selfish* unaccountable Perversion of the Glorious Gospel, which is purely designed to preach Christ, and to advance the Interests of his Kingdom of Grace, by making him known in his Glorious Person, Natures and Offices, in proportion unto the various States and Conditions of Sinners; but no ways to be a subservient Tool unto the Covetousness, Pride, and irregular Passions of Men; I say, this gross Misimprovement of the Gospel cannot but prove a great Abomination in the sight of a Jealous God. And certainly when the chief Shepherd shall appear, and by his Heart-searching Eye, come to set the low and base Principles, Motives and Ends in a clear light, which such Men had in their engaging with, and continuing in the Holy Ministry; 'tis impossible, but of all other Ranks of Men appearing before the Great Tribunal, they must be the most confounded and self-condemned in that Day; and

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that as having been unfaithful in the greateſt of Truſts, perverting the deepeſt Counſels of infinite Wiſdom, and the richeſt Offers of the Divine Love and Grace, in order to the ſerving and ſatisfying their own Luſts, and the inordinate Deſires thereof. And therefore no wonder, if the Threatnings againſt ſuch unfaithful Servants be moſt explicite and terrible, *Matth.* 24. 48, 49, 50, 51. a Context very much deſerving Conſideration.

Having now diſcourſed of the ſeveral *unfaithful* Ways of preaching the Glorious Goſpel, let us next take under ſerious Conſideration, ſome moſt *improper* Ways of diſpenſing the ſame. Which may juſtly be ſo termed; becauſe, 1. They have no proper tendency, but rather the contrary, towards advancing the great Ends of the Goſpel. 2. Becauſe, even as to the external Diſpenſation thereof, they rather diminiſh and deform it, than any ways commend or adorn it unto the Minds of the Hearers: And therefore, as being unſuitable unto, and unworthy of the Glorious Goſpel, they ought to be much guarded againſt; that ſo in preaching the Word of the Lord, there may not only be Faithfulneſs, but alſo ſuch a dividing of the Word of Truth, as becometh Workmen that need not be aſhamed, 2 *Tim.* 2. 15.

The *firſt* of theſe *improper Ways*, is what may be called a *confuſed and indiſtinct Way*: Which is when Sermons are ſo irregularly diſpoſed, that neither the Judgment, nor the Memory (not to ſpeak of the Heart or Affections) can receive any conſiderable Advantage by the ſame. Which is a Method quite contrary unto the Account given of the manner of reading and expounding the Book of the Law of God, *Neh.* 8. 8. *So they read in the Book, in*

the Law of God, distinctly, and gave the Sense, and caused them to understand the Reading.

But perhaps it will be here enquired, When Ministers may be said to fall into this confused, indistinct Way of Preaching? In answer to which let us consider, that it falls out in the following Cases. As, 1. When there is a great Multiplicity of different Purposes in one and the same Sermon, and all of them so intermixed with one another, and that without finishing one before another be begun, that the most attentive and judicious Hearers can neither make account of any particular Scope of the Discourse, nor of any principal Truths handled therein; but least of all, of any Connexion among the several Parts of the Sermon. All which Irregularity must certainly be much owing unto Mens not considering the principal Design of their Text or Doctrine observed therefrom; and thereupon accordingly correcting all extraneous Thoughts which look not that way: that so the proper Matter, and genuine Fruit of every Text, being kept by it self, and not spoiled by a heterogeneous Mixture from several other different Subjects, may appear most beautiful in its Season. 2. A *preposterous Disposition* of Matter, arising from too great haste in studying thereof, adds also much unto the Confusion of a Sermon: As, when the Gospel is greatly crying up the Privileges and Blessedness of the People of God, without first giving some clear Description of the Persons concerned: or when it is insisting on a great many Directions towards performing such and such a Duty, and yet hath not allowed one Sentence first to open the Nature and Import of the said Duty. 3. *Improper Explications* of, and Enlargements upon principal Heads, do also very much

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darken Gospel-Sermons: for, when either the Explication or Enlargement runs away from the Head, as not keeping close by the Purpose thereof; or on the other hand, is delivered in such unclear and general Terms, as it remains fully as dark as the Head it self; this cannot but prove most unpleasant unto the expectant Mind of the attentive Hearer; and so much chagrines the same, that it confuseth more and more: whereas Words fitly spoken, are like *Apples of Gold in Pictures of Silver*, Prov. 25. 11.

A Second *improper Way* of preaching the Gospel, and which is most unworthy of the same, is what may be termed an *empty* and *shallow Way*; which is, when there is a great Noise of Words, but very little of important Matter contained in the same. And this falls out in the following Cases: As, 1. When the *Matter* of Sermons is of little moment and consequence unto the spiritual or eternal Interests of the Hearers; but only perhaps consisting of some Collections of History, or of Moral Maxims and Sayings, or of some very indifferent Controversy, or at best of some scriptural Context, which hath little Concern with the great Truths of the Gospel, or the Essentials of Religion. 2. When the Matter of Sermons is in a great measure in vain, and useless unto the Hearers: As, when many Sermons are spent in explaining some exceeding clear and obvious Truth, which all the Congregation already understand; or in proving some Point, which none of the Hearers in the least dispute or doubt of; or in giving a great many Reasons for a Truth, the rational Account of which is plain unto all, and that previous unto the Proposal of the said Reasons. 3. When a great many synonimous Words, Phra-

ses,

ses, and Repetitions, are heaped up together, and all perhaps but explaining one and the same Head; so that altho' there has been most serious Attention unto all, yet the most judicious Hearer cannot possibly find out any thing material in the whole, but what was comprehended in one Sentence or two at the beginning. 4. When there is much of Confidence and Boldness in Assertions upon controversial Points, and yet little of close Reasoning or of solid Argument going before the same. 5. When a Minister is so long in prefacing and premising this and the other Consideration, that the Sermon is near finished, before ever he engage with the principal Purpose, or advance any thing that is material. All which Ways, as tending greatly to diminish the Reputation of the Glorious Gospel in the Minds of sensible Judicious Persons, ought most carefully to be avoided; *Job* 32. 12. *Yea I attended unto you; and behold there was none of you that convinced* Job, *or that answered his Words.*

A Third *improper Way* of preaching the Gospel, is, what may be called a *heterogeneous Way*; which is, when the Choice of Subjects doth not correspond with the Occasions upon which they are preached: As, 1*st*. When a rude ignorant People, needing to be instructed in the very first Principles of Religion, are entertained with the highest and nicest Points and Controversies therein. 2*dly*. When a wicked prophane People have the great Consolations of the Gospel daily sounded in their Ears, as if the same belonged unto them. 3*dly*. When at the Celebration of the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, Subjects very much extrinsick to Christ and him crucified, and exceeding remote from the serious Soul-Exercises, which use to be with the Godly at such times, are chosen and insisted

insisted upon. 4*thly*. When Thanksgiving Subjects are preached on Fast-days; or Subjects proper to Days of Humiliation are chosen for Thanksgiving occasions. All which must be owned not to be Words spoken in Season, which are necessary towards commending the Gospel to the Consciences of the Hearers, *Isa.* 50. 4.

A Fourth *Improper Way* of Preaching the Gospel is, an affected and vain glorious Way. Which is, when Men affect and aspire unto another way of Preaching the Gospel, than what is really proportioned either unto the measure of Gifts which God hath given, or unto the quality or capacity of their People. And this prevails in these three following Cases. As, 1. When a Minister spends more Time in studying a *high learned Dialect*, far above the reach of the greater part of the Congregation, than what he doth in finding out massy pertinent Truths, suitable unto the various Soul Cases of his Flock. 2. When though the Matter be good and pertinent, yet the Stile is so *Light* and *Pedantick*, by reason of some wild airy Notions and Phrases, as rendereth it altogether unsuitable unto the great Import and Gravity of the Subject. 3. When so much Matter is put together, and that in such a compendious and comprehensive Way, as though it might be of some use to one or two Learned Persons in the Congregation; yet 'tis undeniable, that for want of a particular Division and Subdivision of the aforesaid Matter, into so many distinct Heads, the Learned Harangue will be in a great measure lost, unto all the rest of the Congregation. And therefore, when Men have this comprehending and compendizing Gift from God, it cannot but certainly prove a Piece of most acceptable Self-denial,

nial, in the Divine Account, for such Ministers in all their Sermons, particularly to consult and condescend unto the Capacities of different Congregations, as Providence may call them from Time to Time unto. Accordingly we find the great and wise Apostle, who was not behind the greatest of them, and whose Education was learned and high, yet expressly decrying Ministers Preaching Christ, with the enticing Words of Man's Wisdom, or with too much of the Artificial Excellency of Human Speech, 1 *Cor.* 2. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. but withal, no Extream being good; therefore,

A Fifth *Improper Way* of Preaching the Gospel, is what may be called a *precipitant Blundering Way.* Which is, when through want of due Deliberation in composing the Matter of the Sermon; or for want of distinct Notions and remembrance of the Purposes designed, the Preacher falls into a great many obvious Mistakes. As, 1. Observing of Doctrines from the Text, which hath little or no Foundation in the same: Or at least choosing out that Doctrine which lies only as a Parenthesis or a Collateral Truth in the Text; and that while the principal Truths, which the Text directly points at, are altogether omitted. 2. When Arguments or Reasons are adduced, which have little or no probative Connection with the Truths designed. 3. When some insignificant Criticisms upon the Original, or some *Greek* or *Latin* Sentences are adduced, as if they had some great Matters in them, and yet in their Import are most mean and common. All which, whatever Sentiments they may beget among the more Ignorant, yet do inexpressibly diminish Ministerial Reputation, among the more solid and judicious.

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And so likewise, 4. When there is not a clear and distinct *Transition* from one Purpose to another, but on the contrary, the Matter much perplexed, and the Speech so confused, that no Hearer understands where the Discourse is intending. 5. When *Impertinent Similies* or Allegories are made use of, which are either unsuitable to the Purpose designed, or are so mean and flat in their Matter, that they rather occasion Mockery and Contempt, than any thing of solid Illustration or Edification. 6. When any Texts of Scripture which are quoted, are obviously *misinterpreted* or *misapplied*; or some stretch or other made thereupon, which the Text can no ways accountably bear. 7. When *Blunders* in the using such and such Terms and Expressions do fall out. As when some Terms usual among the Learned Schoolmen, not being well understood, by the Preacher himself, are brought to signifie what is not really intended by them; or some Phrases brought from Foreign Languages, improperly applied; or when Citations from Books and Authors are through overly reading much misrepresented. All which, together with several other Mistakes and Blunders of the like kind, as they are contrary unto the notour and acknowledged Rules of that Ingenuity, Solidity and Accuracy, which ought to adorn all Publick Discourses, so more especially they are most unsuitable unto and unworthy of the Dispensation of the Truths of the glorious Gospel. For, however the greatest Accuracy, where the Eye is not single, can no ways commend to God, yet on the other Hand, considering what a great advance Learning and Knowledge hath now made in the World, it remains certainly to be every Ministers Duty, in Proportion to his Gifts, and his Peo-

Peoples Capacity, to endeavour as much of solid Accuracy, as what he can. And hence it was meet, that even a great *Moses* should have an *Aaron*, when going before *Pharaoh* and the Learned *Egyptians*, to be a Mouth unto him, *Exod.* 4. 14, 15.

CHAP. II.

Several general Directions, towards the faithful and proper Dispensation of the Gospel. As, 1. *That great Care be taken towards a prudent Choice of* proper *Subjects to insist upon.* 2. *That the* Method *used in handling the Subject, be adjusted unto the Nature and Scope thereof.* 3. *That all Things in the Expression and Utterance, tending most to Edification, be particularly consulted: Such as, Clearness, Pertinency, Gravity and Massyness in Diction and Dialect.* 4. *That in a special Manner, suitableness of Frame, becoming the Oracles of God, and proper unto the great Import and Consequence of the Truths of the glorious Gospel, be much endeavoured in Preaching thereof.* 5. *That great closeness be endeavoured in the applicatory Part of Sermons, towards the bringing home of Gospel Truths unto the Conscience. Towards a prudent Choice of Subjects, four Rules are to be observed. These Rules are*

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all particularly discourſed. In treating of which, the various ſpiritual Conditions of Congregations are conſidered; together with the various Subjects, accordingly adjuſted unto them. Solemn Days for Humiliation, and for Thankſgiving, together with Sacramental Occaſions, deſerve a ſpecial regard in the choice of Subjects. The Nature and Scope of Texts proper for ſuch Solemnities, particularly declared.

THE ſeveral *Unfaithful* and *Improper Ways* of diſpenſing the glorious Goſpel, having been diſcourſed in the preceding Chapter; I ſhall in the next Place, as moſt natively falling in, humbly offer, under the Conduct of Scripture-light, ſome *Directions* towards the faithful and proper Preaching of the Goſpel. That ſo, on the one Hand, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, together with the great Truths relative to Salvation, may be truly and clearly declared, and on the other, may be ſo diſcourſed, that in the Preaching of them, the Goſpel may be adorned. And of theſe Directions, ſome ſhall be more General, and others of them more Particular.

The *General Directions* may be ſumm'd up to theſe Four Heads. As, 1. That great Care be taken from Time to Time, towards a prudent Choice of proper Subjects to preach upon. 2. That in handling theſe Subjects, a proper Method be fallen upon, adjuſted unto the Nature and Scope of ſuch as are choſen. 3. That all things in the Expreſſion and Utterance, tending moſt to Edification, be particularly conſulted; ſuch as, Clear-

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nefs, Pertinency, Gravity and Maſſyneſs in Diction and Dialect. 4. That eſpecially ſuitableneſs of Frame, becoming the Oracles of God, and proper unto the great Import and Conſequence of the Truths of the glorious Goſpel, be much endeavoured in Preaching thereof. 5. That great cloſeneſs be endeavoured in the Application of Goſpel Truths, towards the bringing them home unto the Conſciences of the Hearers. All which Directions, upon a little ſerious Review, we ſhall find very clearly comprehended in that remarkable Commendation, given by the Holy Ghoſt, to the great Preacher of old; *Eccleſ.* 12. 9, 10. *And moreover, becauſe the Preacher was wiſe, he ſtill taught the People Knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and ſought out, and ſet in order many Proverbs. The Preacher ſought to find out acceptable Words, and that which was written was upright, even Words of Truth.*

Towards a prudent Choice of Subjects (which is the firſt Direction) ſeveral Things muſt be conſidered. Such as, 1. The ſpiritual State and Condition of the People, among whom a Miniſter is poſted. 2. Their Capacity in Reference unto their Hearing and Improving the Goſpel. 3. The predominant reigning Sins of Omiſſion or Commiſſion, which avowedly abound amongſt them. 4. The different Providential Occaſions, in relation to which, a Miniſter may be called to preach unto them. According to all which, 'tis evident, the choice of Subjects ought to be regulate.

And therefore, 1. When a Miniſter finds his Congregation to be a moſt Ignorant and Rude People, then 'tis plain, that the two grand Doctrines of the *Law* and *Goſpel*, to wit, the Covenant of Works, and of Grace, ſhould ſpend a great many Sermons, in opening of them up:

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Chooſing particularly ſuch Texts, as will give moſt direct and full Acceſs to declare theſe Three Principal Heads, upon which the whole of the Goſpel turns. 1. Man's Sin, Miſery and Impotency by Nature. 2. The glorious Remedy provided in Chriſt, as Prophet, Prieſt and King. 3. The Neceſſity and Nature of Regeneration, Faith, Repentance and true Holineſs in order to Salvation: For certain it is, that till once a People get ſound and clear Notions of thoſe *leading Truths*, 'tis impoſſible for them, either to hear or improve any of the Doctrines of the Goſpel to ſaving Advantage. And hence we find, *John* the *Baptiſt*, that great Miniſter of the New Teſtament, and who was to make our Lord's way ſtraight, inſiſting much upon thoſe fundamental Points, *Matth.* 3. 1, to 13. *John* 1. 15, to 37.

2. But if on the other Hand, a People excel in Head Knowledge and in Morality, as ſome Congregations do greatly in reſpect of others, then in that Caſe, 'tis clear, that Miniſter's Subjects ſhould be principally ſuch as may, 1. Open up the Difference betwixt the Form of Godlineſs, and the Life and Power thereof; ſhewing particularly what great lengths Perſons may come in the Externals of Religion, and yet be nought in the ſight of God. And thereupon, 2. They ſhould alſo be ſuch, as will particularly declare and explain the Eſſentials of Religion, ſuch as ſaving Knowledge, ſound Faith, ſincere Love, true practical Holineſs, and the like; for thus we find our Lord from Sermon to Sermon, treating the *Scribes* and *Phariſees* among the *Jews*, as knowing that they did not ſo much want the Head Knowledge of the Doctrines of Religion, as what they were

Strangers unto Sincerity and Practice therein, *Matth.* 5. 20. and 23. 13, to 34.

3. There are also several Congregations (as generally speaking most are) who are more of a mixed Nature, as consisting of some very ignorant, and of others more knowing; of some grosly Immoral, and of others perfectly Sober and Blameless, but yet Unregenerate; of some under promising Convictions and Motions from the Spirit, and of others who are already brought in to Christ, and who are following on to know more and more of Conformity to him, and Communion with him. In which Case, our Lord's grand Direction to all Ministers, *Luke* 12. 42. Of giving to every one their Portion in due season, ought certainly to take place: Providing always, that in the choice of Texts, a special regard be had to the alarming the Unconverted, and to the searching out of the Hypocrite, the cherishing of the smoaking Flax, and the strengthning of the Godly in their progress Heaven-ward, *Rev.* 3. 1, 2, 3, 4. And 'tis certain, that considering the manifold and various *Inferences*, which are most natively deducible from most of important Gospel Truths, a judicious Improver of them, may cause them so to spread their Branches abroad, as to bring forth Fruit proper for the several Conditions of their Hearers. But being to discourse at considerable length the Matter of the Gospel, as adjusted both to converted and unconverted, and unto the whole various Conditions and Circumstances, that each of them can be in, I shall not here enlarge further on this Head: But come,

In the last Place, to discourse some especial *Providential Occurrences*, falling out at Times, which ought very much to be considered in Ministers choice

choice of Subjects. As, 1. When Providence is remarkably afflicting the Congregation, and the Divine Hand in several Respects gone out against several Persons or Families therein: In that Case 'tis plain, that some serious Sermons pressing *Self-examination*, *Repentance*, *Prayer* and *Supplication*, should be preached among them, *Lam.* 3. 40. *Psal.* 119. 59, 60. Again, 2. When the Spirit of God is at any Time, (more than ordinary) striving with a People; so that *considerable awakenings*, and several serious like Essays and Exercises are to be found among them, 'tis then certainly a most proper Season, for the Gospel to strike in with the Spirit of God, 1. By confirming in a prudent Manner the Voice of the Law; I mean, shewing the great Misery of all out of Christ, so far as to make Conviction-work the deeper, and the more affecting, that so it may advance into Contrition. 2. By shewing them the hazard of all legal Extreams; such as too great Despondency on the one Hand, or Confidence in any Temporary Reformations on the other: Both which are Rocks upon which awakened Consciences are too ready to split. 3. By clearing up distinctly the true Nature and Import of justifying Faith, and Evangelical Repentance. 4. By holding forth Christ as the *End of the Law* for Righteousness, shewing that the Righteousness of Christ, was indeed designed of God, as a Righteousness for all truly convinced and humbled Sinners. 5. As a necessary Caveat against spiritual Abortion, there would also be interlined some seasonable Memorandums, about the Uncertainty of the Issue of common Operations; shewing how many begin in the Spirit, but end in the Flesh: As also declaring the lamentable Consequences of quenching

the Spirit; holding forth, how such often become the most *abominable Apostates* of all others, as being judicially hardened by God, and given up unto the sway of their own wicked Hearts. And thereupon finally, the great Need of their entertaining the Spirit, by the diligent use of all proper Means towards Conversion, and of crying to God to proceed from a common to a saving Work, would also be particularly insisted upon. All which Subjects, upon a little enquiry into the following Contexts, we shall find, were insisted upon by the Prophets, our Lord and his Apostles, in relation to Persons so circumstantiate, *Hos.* 6. 4. *Acts* 2. 37, to 43. and 16. 30, 31. *Mark* 12. 34.

And so likewise, 3. When on the other Hand, instead of any promising Work of the Spirit under the Gospel, the grossest of irreligious Principles and Practices begin to abound and prevail in a Congregation; in that Case, 'tis clear, that the solid Confutation of such pernicious Tenets, by Scripture and Reason; and the decrying such practical Abominations, by clearing the great Evil thereof, and denouncing the Divine Threatnings against the same, must undoubtedly be a great Part of a Minister's Work, who is so circumstantiate, *Ezek.* 22. 1, to 13. 2 *Tim.* 4. 2. *Titus* 1. 9. I might here also speak of the Case of the Congregation, when much of *Desertion* and of a *spiritual Decay* prevaileth among the Godly, and how then 'tis proper to insist upon such Subjects, as have a tendency to rouze and restore such Persons from their carnal Sloath and Security, *Rev.* 2. 4, 5. But these being particularly treated of, in the subsequent Third Part, I shall not here anticipate what is there designed.

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As for the more *Remarkable* and *Solemn* Providential Publick Occasions; such as Days set a part for Publick *Humiliation*, *Thanksgiving*, or *Communion* Times, for the Celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; 'tis evident, that when Subjects, little adjusted to the principal Designs of such Solemnities are insisted upon, that in that Case, the Gospel becomes most disagreeable unto the more judicious and serious Part of the Congregation. And therefore when upon a Fast-day, there is nothing of the Causes of the Fast mentioned, nor any thing like close bringing home of Guilt unto the Consciences of the Congregation, so far as there is ground for the same; nor any thing of the Nature of Self-searching, sincere Confession, and Godly Sorrow opened up, nor the need of the Fountain opened for Sin and for Uncleanness declared; I say, when those seasonable Truths are much past over in Silence, at such a Time; and the People on the contrary only entertained with some remote general Truths; undoubtedly, to say no more, the proper and true Work of the Day, is very much to begin when Sermon is ended. All which is far from the Holy Prophets way of managing such solemn Occasions, *Isa.* 50. *Joel* 2. 12, to 18. For behold how particularly they declare what Fasts are acceptable, and what not; as also open up the Essentials of that important Duty, as requiring brokenness of Heart, and universal practical Reformation in the Life and Walk: Yea they come so close to Conscience, as to require, that every Man lay to Heart, his own Personal Guilt, and seriously consider on what *he* hath done, that hath provoked the Lord, *Jer.* 8. 6.

So likewise; when upon *Thanksgiving Days*, the *remarkable Providences* giving Ground for the Duty, are but little taken notice of, and the Divine Hand no ways particularly demonstrate to be in the same, nor the manifold obliging Mercies implied therein, together with the Nation or Congregation's unworthiness thereof, any ways insisted upon; as also when the particular Voice of the said Mercies is not declared, nor the true Nature and Import of sincere, cordial, practical Thanksgiving opened up, and brought home to the Consciences of the several Families and Persons of the Congregation; together with the great hazard of a Misimprovement of the same: But on the other Hand, perhaps only some general Assertions and Acknowledgments of the Divine Goodness and Bounty, together with some Exhortations to rejoice and be glad, and that without any due mixture of necessary Cautions and practical Instructions, towards the making a suitable return unto the Lord for all his great Mercies; I say, when Thanksgiving Days are thus managed, 'tis clear, that God, for whose Praise and Glory they are principally designed, doth in a great measure lose the same. And if we consult *Psalm* 81. which was penned as a solemn Publick Thanksgiving to God, to be Sung at their Three Solemn Feasts, to wit, the Feast of unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles, *Deut.* 16. 1, to 18. We shall find the whole of the foresaid Particulars very accurately observed therein. To all which I shall only subjoin, that certainly in order to the adorning the Work of such a Day; the making of some special *solid Remarks* upon the Conduct of Divine Providence in the bringing about of such

and

and such great Mercies, cannot but very much tend to advance the same; and that by impressing the People with some high, honourable and grateful Thoughts and Sentiments of such a powerful and gracious God. Accordingly we find this was *Moses*'s Method, in his remarkable Song, *Exod.* 15.

But above all *Publick Occasions*, a special Care would undoubtedly be taken in choosing pertinent Subjects at the great Gospel Solemnity, of the Celebration of the Holy Sacrament of the *Lord's Supper*. For, as there is no Ordinance in which the Glory of God, and the Honour of the Mediator is more concerned, and by which they may be more advanced; so there ought accordingly to be a most wise and suitable choice of Texts, for Sacramental Sermons. And tho' no Man is to be limited, or fixed to any particular Chapter or Verse, the whole Book of God being richly furnished that way; yet certain it is, that 1. In the Sermons ordinarily called *Preparatory* Sermons, such Subjects would be chosen, as will natively give most access to shew the Nature and Design of the Ordinance, the necessary Qualifications of worthy Communicants, the great Sin and Danger of unworthy Participation; and as will tend to answer and clear the manifold, and various perplexing, exercising Doubts and Objections, which use to be with serious Persons at such a Time. Accordingly we find the Holy Ghost take Care to clear all these Particulars in that remarkable Context, 1 *Cor.* 11. 23, to the end; compar'd with *Exod.* 12.

And so, 2. In the Sermon ordinarily termed the Action Sermon, 'tis clear that the principal Doctrines opening up the Covenant of Redemp-

tion and Grace, such as the great Truths relative to the Divine Donation of the Elect to Christ, the Eternal Designation of the Second Person as Mediator, the Son's Incarnation, Death and Resurrection, together with the compleat Purchase of Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption, arising from our Lord's Active and Passive Obedience, in the Elects Name and Room: I say these Subjects, together with the clearing the Nature of Faith, and the Necessity of it in order to Salvation, and the holding out the solid scriptural Evidences thereof, for the Comfort of the Godly; and upon the whole, making solemn, full and free offers of Christ, and of the great Blessings of the Covenant to all thirsting, longing Souls, that so the various Sacramental Graces may be excited and drawn forth into Exercise, are certainly the Truths which of all others lye neareſt the true Import and real Design of that great Ordinance of the Lord's Supper. The Sum of all which, upon a little serious pondering our Lord's Words in the Institution, will presently appear to be contained in them, *Matth.* 26. 26, 27, 28. As also in the strain of those Sermons, Discourses and Prayer of our Lord's, supposed to have been delivered by him in the Guest's Chamber, at the first Celebration of that Ordinance, *John* 14, 15, 16, 17, Chapters.

As for what concerneth the Discourses, called the *Thanksgiving Sermons*, considering, 1. The sovereign and various Way of God's dealing with the Souls of his People, at Communion-occasions, and how many Mistakes they are ready to fall into with respect to the same: Some few perhaps acknowledging the great Goodness and Condescension of God: But on the other Hand, a great

great many crying out, their Allowance was but small; some complaining of great Disappointments, and others doubting if God hath met with them at all; yea perhaps some asserting, they were never in such an ill case: I say, considering these things, 'tis plain, that in order to the disposing of these dejected serious Souls for praising God and Christ, some account of the various Operations of the Holy Ghost, and of the different Degrees of the Breathings of the North and South Wind, would be given unto them; shewing, that certainly an All-wise God knows better than the wisest of his People, how to measure out the Influences of Light, Life and Joy, unto their Souls, and that according to their different Cases, Duties, Difficulties and Stations in the World, *Psal.* 84. 11. And so likewise, 2. considering that no Ordinance lays greater Obligations upon the People of God to great Love and Obedience, than what this one doth; therefore *Practical Subjects*, pressing those Duties closely home upon the Consciences of Communicants; particularly cautioning against all quenching of the Spirit, and shewing how, by a sincere, universal, constant, zealous Course of holy Obedience, to hold and detain the Beloved, when come into his Garden, must certainly also be a most proper Theme upon such an Occasion; *Song* 3. 4. *Psal.* 119. 115. *Psal.* 116. 9. 2 *Cor.* 5. 14. As, 3. Considering how many *formal Communicants*, altogether Strangers both to the Truth and Exercise of the Sacramental Graces, do adventure to approach that holy Ordinance, and thereupon account themselves true Believers, and groundlesly assure their Souls of Salvation; 'tis therefore undoubtedly most proper in such Sermons, concluding

cluding those Gospel-Solemnities, at least to interline some Notes towards the Discovery of the *hypocritical* from the *sincere* Communicant: That so the truly godly and *upright* Soul may go away rejoicing from that great Feast; and on the other hand, the *unsound* presumptuous Professor may be undeceived, and made to seek for the true Wedding Garment, against the next Appearance amongst the Guests of the Omniscient and Heart-searching King, *Matth.* 22. 11, to 15. And therefore upon the whole, such Texts as are of a complex Kind and Import, looking towards the several Purposes which have been named, seems to be the Subjects most adjusted to such Occasions; and which will least oblige unto any irregular Stretch or Digression in discoursing the same. To all which I might add, that if we search the Sacramental Books or Sermons, published by some of the great Lights of the Church, we shall find how much they have set themselves, in all the aforesaid respects, to find out acceptable Words; even such Texts and Truths, as in a great measure spoke to the People, before they were spoke upon, by the Minister's insisting upon them.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

The second general Direction *towards a faithful and proper Dispensation of the Gospel, is, that a* proper Method *be fallen upon, adjusted unto the Nature and Scope of the Subject chosen. In discoursing this Head,* 1. *Some Considerations relative to* Method *in general are premised.* 2. *The several Methods of preaching the Gospel, to wit, the* Homiletical, Textual *and* Occasional, *are all proposed.* 3. *A Scheme by way of Sermon, offered for the Illustration of the Homiletical Method.*

THE second general Direction towards a faithful and prudent Dispensation of the Gospel in the preaching thereof, is, that after a wise Choice of Subjects, as hath been discoursed in the preceding Chapter, there be next a *proper Method* fallen upon, agreeable unto the Nature and Scope of the Subject chosen, that so the same may be managed and discoursed to the greatest advantage. To which purpose 'tis most remarkable, what is said of the wise and faithful Preacher, *Eccl.* 12. 9. *And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the People Knowledge; yea he gave good heed, and sought out, and* set in order *many Proverbs:* importing, that Ministers ought not only to study excellent Matter, but also endeavour a proper and distinct Method; even such as may most advance a clear Explication, and a close and faithful Application of the Doctrines they insist upon.

In

In discoursing this Head of a *proper Method* to be used in Gospel-Sermons, I shall first premise some general Considerations relative thereto: And 2. shall more directly discourse the several Methods used at this day in Sermons; beginning in this Chapter with the *Homiletical*, and thereupon in the following shall treat of the *Textual* and *Occasional*; humbly offering some Remarks in relation to them all; shewing in what cases the Homiletical, and in what cases the Textual and Occasional may be most proper.

As for the more *general Considerations*; it would first be remembred, that a *distinct Method* in treating of Gospel-Truths, is most necessary towards Edification. All the Powers and Faculties of the rational Mind call for it: The *Understanding*, that it may proceed unto a right Judgment: The *Will*, that it may upon clear and solid Grounds chuse or refuse: The *Affections*, that they being sensibly touched, may move regularly: The *Memory*, that it receiving distinctly, may the more tenaciously retain: and so likewise the *Conscience*, that being spoken to, it may accordingly excuse or accuse, as there is ground. Thus all the Powers of the Soul require a Distinctness of Method: For tho' it must still be owned, that the most excellent *Matter* and *Method* that can possibly be advanced by Man or Angel, can never savingly enter or affect any Power of the Soul, without a special supernatural Divine Influence accompanying the same; yet still rational Man must be treated with, in a rational way, and must be brought to the Knowledge and Faith of Conclusions, by the previous Knowledge and Belief of the Premisses; and consequently, *Method* must still be most necessary. Accordingly, if we consult our Lord's *famous Epistles* by *John* to the

Seven

Seven Churches, we shall find them most methodically digested, consisting, 1. of a Preface; 2. of the Body or Matter of the Epistle; and 3. of a Conclusion, containing the principal Scope of the whole. Briefly, Man's Mind is but *finite*, and especially straitned in the apprehension of spiritual things; and therefore the Truths of the Gospel must not in *gross* be crowded together, nor cramb'd down in bulk, but must be distinctly one after another proposed in order; and that according to the Nature and Import of the Truths which are delivered.

And so, 2. With respect to *Method*, it would be considered, that none can suppose (considering the great *Variety* of Gospel-Subjects, and the vast difference among them) that *one* and the *same* Method can be proper for all Texts: For, 1. Some Texts and Doctrines (by which I mean *Doctrinal Observations* founded thereon) require no more previous to Application, save only the Reasons of the Doctrine: As when a Minister's Doctrine is, That Christ deserveth the Hearts of the Children of Men above all; or that Sin ought to be hated above all things. So likewise, 2. Other Doctrines, as being *simple Positions*, such as, that there is a superlative Glory and Excellency in Christ; that there is a great Beauty and Gain in Godliness, or that there is a great Evil in Sin; these I say, require principally solid *Confirmation*: As, 3. Some Doctrines being *controversial*, such as, that Justification is not by the Works of the Law, but by Faith in Jesus Christ; these again require the *Explication* of Terms, the *Probation* of the Truth confirmed by pertinent Arguments, and the taking off the several most weighty Objections and Exceptions against the same: As also, 4. Other Doctrines

ctrines being exceeding *complex* and *practical*, such as, that sound Faith, sincere Repentance, and true Holiness, are all necessary unto Salvation. Here 'tis evident, that 1*st*. the Nature, Import, and distinguishing Properties of these great Gospel-Duties and Graces should be open'd up; and 2*dly*. their Necessity cleared, before ever there is any proper access for one Sentence of Application. Again, 5. Some Doctrines have something *emphatical* in them, which stands as the most remarkable and substantial part of the same; such as, when Ministers are preaching, That God *so* loved the Elect World to that degree, as to give his only begotten Son to the Death for them: In which case, 'tis clear, that the proving and illustrating Christ's Death in the Elect's room, to be the greatest Argument and Demonstration of the Divine Love, is the Explication which such a Doctrine principally requireth.

So that upon the whole, Two things are clear: 1*st*. That some Doctrines founded upon Texts of Scripture, being most plain in themselves, and for the most part practical, that such need but little of Explication: In which case 'tis certain, that the Substance of such Sermons ought to run in Application. As on the other hand, 2. There are other Doctrines, which being more intricate and difficult, and appertaining rather to the Principles and Theory of Reveal'd Religion, than unto the Precepts and Practice thereof; 'tis equally plain, that such Doctrinal Observations do require more of Explication and Illustration, than of any practical Application. Altho' at the same time it must be acknowledged, that there are few or none of any of the great Truths of Revealed Religion, whether more Speculative or Practical, but still

ſtill admit, in leſs or in more, of ſomething of both. But the great Point of Miniſterial Wiſdom conſiſteth in an accurate and juſt Obſervation of the difference of Goſpel-Texts, and accordingly managing the Explication and Application of the Truths contained therein.

Theſe things being premiſed, I come to the Second Head; to wit, the diſcourſing the ſeveral Methods uſed at this day in preaching the Goſpel, which may be ſummed up to theſe Three Heads: 1. The *Homiletical*; 2. *Textual*; and 3. the *Occaſional* Method.

That termed the *Homiletical*, according to the original Import of the Word Ὁμιλέω, denoteth a skilful way of diſcourſing or converſing with a Multitude, in order to make them *one* in Principles and Practice. And tho' I know ſome ſpeak of it, and perhaps juſtly, as being begun by *Muſculus*, in reſpect of formal Preaching by Doctrines and Uſes, and to have been enlarged by Mr. *Udal*, with the addition of Reaſons; yet I conceive, that none conſulting the Scriptures can be ignorant of its having been long in uſe, to fix upon ſome *principal* Truth, and thereupon to ſubjoin Explication and Application, according to the Nature and Scope thereof.

This *Homiletical* Method, according to general Uſe, conſiſteth of theſe following Parts: As, 1. Of a pertinent brief *Introduction* unto the Words. 2. A diſtinct *Diviſion* and *Explication* of the ſeveral Parts of the Text: Upon which, 3. Some principal *Doctrinal Obſervations*, one or more, are inſiſted upon. In diſcourſing of which, 4. The principal Parts of the Doctrine are *open'd up*, according to their Nature and Import: All which, 5. Iſſueth in *Application* or practical Improvement; and that either

either by way of Information, Confutation, Examination, Reproof, Lamentation, Consolation, or Exhortation; according to the Import and Scope of the Doctrinal Truth insisted on.

All which being consider'd, 'tis evident that the first grand Rule for improving this Homiletical Method in treating of any Text, must be, to consult the principal *Scope* of the Text insisted on; and accordingly by the said Scope to regulate the whole Discourse: As, 1. The Doctrinal Observation, so as it may speak out the very Truth principally design'd by the Holy Ghost in the place. 2. The Doctrine being once thus enunciate, it again ought to regulate the several Questions or general Heads propos'd for Explication: so that the principal Parts of the Doctrine ought not only simply to be considered as in themselves, but in their respect to the principal Scope of Text and Doctrine; and accordingly the several explicatory Questions ought to be stated. And thereupon, 3. The several Answers and Enlargements, in discoursing those general Heads, ought likewise to keep close by the Import of the Questions themselves, and to bear a special respect unto the aforesaid principal Scope and Design. And then, 4. In a special manner the Application of the Doctrine would run parallel with the Scope of the Text; containing the chief and substantial Informations, Examinations, Reproofs, Consolations or Exhortations, which tend most towards accomplishing the grand Design of the Holy Ghost in the same.

A twofold Advantage evidently accompanieth this Method in preaching the Gospel: As, 1. Considerable Edification; for all the Parts of the Discourse looking the same way, and towards the same

ſame end; in ſo far as all the Enlargements keep cloſely by all the general Heads, and theſe again being adjuſted unto the Parts of the Doctrine, and the Doctrine unto the Scope of the Text; 'tis impoſſible but the attentive judicious Hearer muſt be very much Maſter of the whole Sermon, and have little difficulty in conceiving or retaining the ſame; at leaſt in reſpect of what he would have, had the Diſcourſe little or no Method or Connection of Purpoſes in it. And ſo likewiſe, 2. In the whole of the Sermon, the Miniſter keeping thus cloſely by his Text, as he thereby gains no ſmall Strength and Confidence unto his own Spirit, as being ſure he is delivering the Mind of the Lord; ſo alſo it gives him great Authority, as an Ambaſſadour of Chriſt, to ſubjoin unto the more important and weighty Reproofs, Conſolations or Exhortations ariſing from the Doctrine; that thus and thus ſaith the Lord. Briefly, all the Particulars relative to the abovementioned Rule might be made very clear (were it needful to enlarge) from the particular Method obſerved by our Lord in his Epiſtles to the Seven Churches.

Let us only view the Epiſtle to *Sardis*, Rev. 3. v. 1, to 7. and conſider how after he hath once condeſcended upon the particular Doctrine he was to inſiſt upon, to wit, *That they had a Name to live, but were dead*, v. 1. I ſay, behold how cloſely in the whole of the Epiſtle he keeps by the Import and Scope of the Charge or Poſition laid down: As, 1. How appoſite is the Introduction, as aſſerting the Divine *Omniſcience*, and that towards ſetting the Charge cloſe home upon the Conſcience. 2. How pertinent is the further Deſcription of their Caſe, *v.* 2. to wit, that any promiſing Remains with them were ready to die, ſo that

their great Name for Livelineſs was groundleſs. 3. Thereupon propoſeth, as falling in moſt natively, ſeveral Directions, as ſo many Remedies towards their Recovery. And, 4. Preſſeth the Performance thereof by ſeveral weighty Reaſons and Threatnings, *v.* 2, 3. 5. Moſt wiſely qualifieth the former Charge, in relation to ſome few, who were truly holy and tender, leſt they ſhould be diſcouraged, *v.* 4. Which Commendation looketh alſo much to the principal Scope, in ſo far as it not only materially condemned the dead and decayed part of this Church, but alſo tended to the ſtirring up a holy Emulation and Zeal towards their becoming like unto thoſe ſo highly commended. And then, 6. He ſhutteth up all with a Concluſion, preſſing Activity and Diligence in our Chriſtian Warfare, againſt all the Enemies of our ſpiritual Life, and Progreſs therein; than which nothing could be more agreeable to the general Scope of the Doctrine, *v.* 5, 6. Upon all which 'tis clear, that the whole Parts of the Diſcourſe are moſt homogeneous, in ſo far as they all jointly conſpire towards, 1. The condemning and decrying of *Formality* and Deadneſs in Religion, and that whether total or partial, amongſt Miniſters or People. 2. To commend and encourage *Sincerity* and *Livelineſs* in Godlineſs: Which two was the principal Scope of the Charge or Poſition laid down by Way of Text or Doctrine in the firſt Verſe.

The *ſecond Rule* to be obſerved towards improving this *Homiletical* Method in preaching to the beſt advantage, is, firſt to conſider what are the *principal Inferences*, which the Doctrine by virtue of its chief Scope, will natively iſſue in, and thereby next to find out (as will by this the more obviouſly

ously occur) what are the prerequisite Truths necessary to be discoursed, towards paving the Way for such and such Inferences.

As when a Minister's Doctrinal Observation is, *That Justification is not by the Works of the Law, but only by Faith in Jesus Christ.* Two things in this case, upon a little Reflection, will presently become most clear: to wit, *first*, that the principal Issue of this Doctrine must land in these two Inferences: 1. To dehort the Hearers from seeking Justification, either in whole or in part, by the Works of the Law. 2. To exhort them to seek it only by *Faith* in Jesus Christ. *Secondly*, These being once foreseen, as the principal Inferences, it will thereupon next evidently appear, that as prerequisite Truths proper for the explicatory part of the Doctrine, these following must be discoursed: As, 1. That some distinct sound Notions of the Term, Justification, should be given, and that both as to what it presupposeth and implieth. 2. The Insufficiency of the best Good Works, towards entring in any respect the meritorious Cause of our Justification. 3. The Perfection of Christ's Righteousness (as consisting of his active and passive Obedience) towards procuring Pardon, Acceptance of Person and Performances as perfectly righteous, and towards the entit'ling of Believers unto Eternal Life, would be particularly open'd up. 4. The Nature and Import of saving Faith, as the Grace of all others, particularly condescended upon by God, as the Instrument for laying hold on Christ's Righteousness, in order to Justification, must also be distinctly discoursed. Upon all which 'tis plain, that the Way for the two foresaid Inferences will be so much paved, as that there can remain no room for the Hearers to refuse their

Assent unto the Truth, Reasonableness, and great Importance of the same. And as this Rule holds good in the Doctrine here instanced, so proportionably in all others. 'Tis indeed true, that where the Doctrine is more complex in its Matter, as it will thereupon look the more ways in point of Application, so it will also require the more Truths to be discoursed in the Explication; but still the general Rule will hold good. And were it necessary to trace the great and accomplished Apostle in his first four Chapters to the *Romans*, and particularly from Chapter 3. 20. to Chap. 5. 1. it were easy to demonstrate, that to make way for the principal practical Inferences arising from the Doctrine of Justification by Faith, he accordingly as Prerequisite Truths, handleth the several Particulars abovementioned.

I come now to the *Second Head* proposed, which was to give a Scheme of a Sermon after the *Homiletical Form*; that so all the foresaid Rules being applied, this Method may be the more illustrate. And that the Subject may be the more important, the Text discoursed shall be these remarkable Words of the Spouse concerning our Lord.

Solomon's Song, chap. 5. 16. *Yea he is altogether lovely.*

And first for Introduction, Division, and Explication, please take as followeth.

Our Lord Jesus Christ being not only the wonderful Mediator, but also the Great God, his Glory and Excellency must certainly transcend all finite Comprehension; and that even where a great and inspired *Solomon* is the Penman.

And therefore no wonder, if after an Essay towards a particular Description of our Lord from his several personal and relative Excellencies commencing from Ver. 10. even this great and wise

Preacher

Preacher be obliged to ſum up all in this comprehenſive General: *Yea, he is altogether lovely.*

The Import of which Commendation is, That all deſirable Perfections, Excellencies and Bleſſings, are to be found with the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

And if the Words be conſidered in their principal *Scope*, as they ſtand in this Context, they give ſolid ground for the following Doctrinal Obſervation; to wit,

That the Lord Jeſus Chriſt having all deſirable Excellencies in him, he is moſt juſtly the Beloved and Center of Believers Souls, and that above all other Objects or Portions whatſoever. In confirmation of this Truth, he is alſo moſt remarkably termed, *The Pearl of great Price*, for which the wiſe Merchant willingly ſells all, *Matth.* 13. 45, 46.

At firſt view this *complex Doctrine* would ſeem to require a great many different Queſtions and Purpoſes to be ſpoken to, in order to its right Proſecution: and yet if the foreſaid Rules of conſidering the principal Scope of the Text and Doctrine, together with the principal Inferences the ſame muſt iſſue in, be cloſely obſerved; it will upon a little ſerious Reflection inſtantly appear,

That this Doctrine divideth it ſelf only into one explicatory and another applicatory Branch.

The *explicatory* is only to clear, that all *deſirable Excellencies* are really to be found in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt: And thereupon the *applicatory* muſt be, to commend highly Believers Choice of him for their Portion; and from thence to reaſon and expoſtulate moſt ſeriouſly with Unbelievers, in order to their falling in love with ſuch an infinitely excellent and glorious Object.

Towards clearing all *deſirable Excellencies* to be in Chriſt; firſt, the Term *Excellencies* being the

general Term, running through the whole of the Discourse; some distinct *Notion* would briefly be given of it; as that it imports extraordinary Perfections rendring the Subject thereof exceeding worthy and glorious, and preferable unto others.

This being premised, in the next place the most comprehensive and *convincing Considerations* of the great Excellencies in Christ would be adduced: Such as, 1. That being God, and the Fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him bodily; there must certainly be found with him all the glorious Perfections, communicable or incommunicable, of the Deity, *Rom.* 9. 5. *Col.* 2. 9. He must be the Eternal, Self-existent, Self-sufficient, Independent and Unchangeable Being: He must be the Omniscient, Omnipresent, Omnipotent God; He must be infinite in Holiness, Justice, Goodness and Truth. And what *greater Excellencies* can possibly be desired, than what these are and can produce unto Believers?

Again, 2*dly*. His being the glorious *first Cause* and Author of all Being and Perfection amongst the Creation; this must likewise demonstrate all desirable Excellencies to be in him, *John* 1. 3. *Heb.* 1. 2. For being the *Fountain Being*, they must be all originally in him; and again, being all created out of nothing, they must be infinitely in him: So that the whole of created Perfections and Excellencies scattered up and down through the whole Creation, in the higher and lower World, among Angels or Men, must all be but a Drop, and less than a Drop, unto the Ocean of essential infinite Fulness in our Lord, *Isa.* 40. 15, to 19. And if so, what Perfection or Blessing can be wanting, either for inward or outward Man?

And

And so likewise, 3*dly*. As *God-Man*, Mediator, having by his Obedience unto Death purchased Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption; he must certainly be a most perfect and compleat Redeemer, 1 *Cor.* 1. 30. *Col.* 2. 10. For by virtue of these several Parts of his great and rich Purchase, 'tis evident that all the Blessings are with him, which ignorant, guilty, corrupt and captivate Man stands in need of in order to Salvation. *Briefly*, our Lord having the Fulness of a God and of the Fountain Being in him; and having also the Fulness of a compleat Mediator; 'tis evident, that every thing desirable for the Human Soul or Body, for Time or Eternity, must certainly be treasured up in him. For what Blessing can an All-sufficient Creator and a gracious Redeemer possibly want?

These *few Heads* are only mentioned as so many proper *Topicks* towards clearing our Lord's superlative Glory and Excellency; and to shew, how the Explication of Doctrines ought to keep close by the principal Scope of the same: Not but that there are a great many *more Topicks* to commend Christ from, than what these are: but these mentioned being the Foundation of all that can be named; and also in Doctrines of this kind, much of Ministerial Wisdom, consisting in a *prudent Reserve* of some special weighty Truths, as so many *Motives* to press home the important Exhortation of embracing Christ; therefore any other Topicks looking this way would be referred to that part of the Discourse; which, because of its great Import and Consequence in relation to the faithful Preaching of Christ, I shall reserve and methodize it into a Chapter by it self.

CHAP. IV.

The Preaching of Christ being the Grand Design *of the Gospel; the commending of him, 1. To Believers, towards their rejoicing in their Choice, loving and glorifying him more and more: And, 2. To Unbelievers, towards compelling them to come in; must certainly be two great Pieces of a Gospel-Dispensation. Accordingly, in order to the close Application of the former explicatory Truths relative to our Lord, several* proper Topicks, *containing some of the most weighty Gospel Motives for prevailing with Sinners to embrace Christ, are condescended upon. These* Motives *are particularly opened up in their Reasonableness and Import: The manifold* Directions *which might be insisted on upon such a Subject, are summed up unto two Heads.*

THE *applicatory Part* of the explicatory Truths contained in the preceding Chapter, ought according to the *Scope* of the Text and Doctrine to run in these two Inferences.

First, that seeing Christ hath all desirable Excellencies in him, then certainly Believers Choice of him, for their Portion, must be the wisest and best Choice of all others in the World. In discoursing of which Inference, 'tis clear that if the *Scope* of the Doctrine be still kept close by, which is to commend Christ; that then the declaring the several

ſeveral excellent Properties of Chriſt, conſidered under the Notion of a *Portion*, as peculiar to himſelf above all other Portions, muſt be the proper Enlargements thereof. Such as, 1. That he is the only *all-ſufficient* and *ſuitable* Portion, that can anſwer all the Wants and Deſires of the whole Man, who can remove all Evil, and introduce all Good; who can effectually remove all Sin and Miſery, and beſtow Peace, Pardon, Grace and Glory upon Man. All which are Bleſſings to be found no where elſe, *Iſa.* 55. 2, 3. 2. That he is the only *ſelf-ſufficient* Portion, who needs not go out of himſelf, and his own Fulneſs for any thing: whereas all other Portions, whether Riches, Honour or Pleaſures, are abſolutely dependent upon a ſuperior Providence, and can only ſerve and ſatisfy according to the Pleaſure thereof, *Jer.* 2. 14. 3. That he is the only *durable* and *unchangeable* Portion; which will ſtill remain the ſame in his Perſon, Perfections, Fulneſs and Love, without any alteration, *Heb.* 13. 8. 4. That he is the only everlaſting Portion, who can render happy in all Caſes and Circumſtances: In Life, in Death, at Judgment, and through Eternity, and who will remain to be a noble Portion, when the World and its temporal Fulneſs ſhall be in a Flame, *John* 17.24. Briefly, that he is the only Soul-ſatisfying Portion, who can reſtore Man again unto the enjoyment of the four great Soul-centering Bleſſings of the Divine Favour, Image, Fellowſhip, and Kingdom. And therefore beyond all controverſy, great muſt be the Wiſdom which is in Believers choice.

The other Branch of the Application is to expoſtulate with Unbelievers, in order to their falling in love with and embracing the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, ſeeing all deſirable Excellencies are to be found with him. And

And here considering, that there is no Branch of Application or *Inference*, which the Gospel can ever possibly insist upon, in which the Glory of God, the Honour of the Mediator, and the Salvation of immortal Souls, can be more concerned, than what in this; therefore certainly there can be no part of Gospel-Doctrine, in which Ministers ought to be more *the well-instructed and ready Scribe*, able to bring out of their Treasure things new and old, by way of *Reasonings*, *Motives*, and *Directions*, towards a due and close Prosecution of the foresaid Inference.

As for proper *Topicks* for Motives, these following are humbly offered: As, 1. The *great Glory* and Excellency of Christ's Person. 2. The Greatness of his *Love* to Sinners. 3. The alluring *Fulness* and *Suitableness* of his Mediatory Offices. 4. The *obliging Methods* and Ways of his executing the same. 5. The *Greatness* of the Salvation, which he brings along with him. And, 6. The *absolute Necessity* of coming to Christ for this Salvation, there being no other Name under Heaven given among Men for that end.

The *Reasonableness* of these Topicks towards perswading Sinners to embrace Christ, will the more appear, if we consider, that before the *rational* Human Soul will make a cordial Choice of an *Invisible Christ*, Man must first have some clear Account of the Excellency of the Object, and of the Good-will of the Person; as also of the Agreeableness of the Person's Perfections unto them, and of the Easiness of the Method and Terms upon which the Marriage Relation may be obtained; and further, of the Greatness of the Happiness which will ensue thereupon; and lastly, to set all the more closely home upon a rational Being, endued with a strong

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Principle of Self-preservation, and an innate Desire towards Happiness, the strong Argument of absolute Necessity, in order to Salvation, would also be improven upon this Head. All which Ways of Reasoning do evidently require the *Whole* of the foresaid *Topicks* to be made use of in Ministers endeavouring to compel Sinners to come in, *Luke* 14. 23.

Now from these general Topicks the following particular Motives may be clearly deduced, towards the perswading Men to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, as offered in the Gospel.

At first, by way of *Motive*, the Hearers of the Gospel would be desired to consider the *infinite transcendent Glory* of the Person of our Lord: and for this end to consider him, 1. As the Glorious Eternal Son of God, having the same Infinite Divine Nature and Perfections with the Father; so that he is the Brightness of his Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person; and therefore must certainly be the most Glorious and Excellent Being, the Supream and Chief Good; and what can the Soul of Man desire more? *Heb.* 1. 3. 2. As the wonderful Person God-Man, *John* 1. 14. which *Aspect* ought certainly to render him most glorious in Man's account. For tho' the Human Nature can add nothing unto the essential Glory of the Divine, yet at the same time it undeniably renders the Person of our Lord most extraordinary and wonderful, and ought justly to make him most amiable to us. The very first Intimation in the Garden, *Gen.* 3. 15. tho' most remote and dark, yet made such extraordinary Impressions upon our first Parents, that they forgot all their Perturbations and Fears, as being taken up with the wonderful Promise of the Seed of the Woman its bruising the Head of

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the Serpent, *Gen.* 3. 15. And indeed who is it among the Children of Men, that will seriously reflect, either upon the grand *End* and Design of the *Hypostatical Union*, to wit, the Redemption of Man, or upon the inconceivable *Intimacy* thereof, whereby our Lord, though really both *God* and *Man*, yet continueth still but one and the *same Person*; or upon the extraordinary *Communion* which must necessarily ensue thereupon betwixt the two Natures; or upon the *Eternity* of that Union and Communion, he being to continue God-Man for ever; I say, who possibly can ponder these Things, and not instantly perceive such a depth of Wisdom and Power, in the Contrivance, and such obliging Condescension and Love in the Deity towards Man, all concentring in the Person of our Lord, as ought justly to render him unto us the most *extraordinary*, *wonderful* and *amiable* Object of all others in the World? *Isa.* 9. 6. *Song* 5. 10.

3*dly*. To proclaim our Lord's Glory and Excellency; his being the Father's Delight, and that from all Eternity; and his being declared by God from Heaven, upon his Incarnation, to be his *beloved Son*, in whom he was well pleased, would also be insisted upon, *Prov.* 8. 30. *Matth.* 17. 5. For certainly an Object *adequate* unto the Infinite Mind and Will, giving God the Father, *perfect* Satisfaction and Delight, and that through an Eternity, must have Infinite Perfections and Excellencies, and must be much more a compleat Object towards the perfecting the Happiness of the *Finite Desires* and Capacities of the Souls of the Children of Men.

4*thly*. In holding forth our Lord's Glory, his being in his Person and Performances to be the *Sub-*

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ject of an *Eternal Song* among the Redeemed, and this Song being always to be *new*, would also be improven, *Rev.* 5. 9. & 7. 10. For 'tis clear, considering how exceedingly the Souls of the Redeemed shall be enlarged in their Intellectual Powers and Capacities, that certainly an Object, inviting unto an Eternal Contemplation, Praise and Admiration, must possess Perfections and Excellencies infinitely above the cleerest and fullest Views and Conceptions, which the most accomplished and penetrating Souls attain unto in this remote and imperfect State. Upon all which Considerations demonstrative of the excellent Transcendent Glory of our Lord's Person, Ministers have undoubtedly the most solid rational Grounds in the World to expostulate with their Hearers to open the Everlasting Doors, and let this King of Glory enter in, *Psalm* 24. 7, 9.

The Second General *Topick* for Motives, is the *greatness of Christ's Love* to Sinners. And as no Consideration hath more of a gaining affecting Influence in it, with the rational Soul, than what the Proposal of Love, especially when seen to be sincere and pure; accordingly this Topick would be so much the more improven, and that in the closest Method imaginable.

As *First*, The *Greatness* of Christ's Love to Sinners would be insisted upon: And that as appearing, 1. In his Incarnation, whereby he greatly vailed the Divine Glory and denied himself, more especially, if the Duration of his Estate of Humiliation for Thirty Years and upward be considered; during which Time, a course of the Sorrows of this Life, and of Contradiction from Sinners was his greatest and daily Entertainment from the Hands of Men, *Heb.* 12. 3. 2. In his astonishing

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Submission and Obedience unto the cursed, ignominious and torturing Death of the Cross; in undergoing which, the whole of the Wrath and Punishment, due unto the Souls and Bodies of the whole of the Elect, upon the Account of their Sins, was inflicted upon him, and born by him, *Isa.* 53. 6. Surely the greatest strongest Love was necessary here: For, *greater Love hath no Man, than this, that a Man lay down his Life for his Friends,* John 15. 13. 3. In the great Chearfulness of his Submission unto Sufferings: Longing for that bloody Baptism; and marching *first* of all the Company up unto *Jerusalem,* and declaring himself in the Garden, to be *the Man* they were seeking; yea, and when the bloody Cup it self came to be put in his Hand, behold what Submission to the Will of his Father. All which surely speak forth, a most deep and unshaken Love, past all Finite Comprehension, *Isa.* 53. 7.

And so, *Secondly,* The great *Freedom* and *Pureness* of this Love of Christ's would be particularly declared: As having very much of an affecting and obliging tendency in it; were not the Hearts of the Children of Men corrupted with unnatural Enmity, and adamantine Hardness and Inflexibility.

Towards displaying the *great Freedom* of Christ's Love, 1. The *Eternity* of it would be declared, whereby it absolutely prevented not only all Promises and Obligations from Man to our Lord, towards his becoming our Redeemer, but even all Supplication it self, which is amongst the lowest Motives to Compassion. And, in the Garden, behold our Lord sought out our first Parents, yea and that even when running away from him. So that there was not one of the Human Race, so much

much as to desire our Lord to transact for lost and undone Man; when from Eternity he said unto the Father, *Psalm* 40. 6. *Sacrifice and Offering thou didst not desire, mine Ears hast thou opened: Burnt-offering and Sin-offering thou hast not required.* Surely then his Love must be absolutely free, and intirely springing from himself.

Again, 2. The *Impossibility* of any *Addition* unto our Lord's Infinite essential Glory and Blessedness by any Love, Service or Praise the Redeemed possibly can perform, doth also proclaim the Love of Christ to be a most pure Love; seeing it proposeth rather to give than receive, and must always first be the Fountain, before any Streams can possibly return unto it, *Psalm* 16. 2. Besides all which, if, 3. The great *Soveraignty* of this Love, manifested in our Lord's not taking upon him the Nature of *Angels*, but of *Men*, be considered, the great Freedom and distinguishing Quality of this Love must certainly appear to a Demonstration. For, considering the Angels in their more high and glorious Natures, and in their more enlarged and elevated Powers and Capacities, 'tis plain, that nothing but the most sovereign Free-love, could have determined in Favours of Man, *Heb.* 2. 16. And if Christ's Love be thus so free, pure and sovereign, what ingenuous rational Soul ought it not deeply to affect and prevail with to return Love for such wonderful and pure Love again: More especially considering that our poor finite Love, in its highest Elevations, can never bear the least Proportion unto the Love of a God, 1 *John* 3. 1. 2 *Cor.* 5. 14, 15.

The Third General *Topick* for Motives, is the alluring *Fulness* and *Suitableness* of the Mediatory Offices, of Prophet, Priest and King. That Man since

since the Fall wants Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption, is so obvious from Scripture, and every sensible Sinners Experience, that there can be no manner of Doubt about it. And on the other Hand, that Christ, as the great Prophet of the Church, can by his Spirit and Word most effectually and savingly instruct the darkest Mind, in relation to Man's natural lost Estate, the Remedy provided in a Mediator, the evil of Sin and beauty of Holiness, the Nature and Necessity of Faith, Repentance and New Obedience, in order to Salvation, is so clear from manifold Scripture Instances, particularly the illiterate Fisher-men the Apostles, that none can deny it. And so likewise, that as *Priest* he can reconcile guilty Sinners to God, and provide them with a perfect Righteousness, in order to their being intituled unto Eternal Life, is so manifest from his undergoing the Curse, and obeying perfectly the Precepts of the Law in the Elects Name and Room, that considering the high Quality and absolute Innocence of the Person so suffering and obeying, 'tis impossible for Reason it self, to form any solid Objection against that grand Truth of Revealed Religion, to wit, the Justification of a believing Sinner by the Imputation of the Righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, 2 *Cor.* 5. 21.

And so as *King*, 'tis equally clear, that he can irresistably subdue the most desperately wicked and obstinate Heart, making the Soul most cordially willing to embrace him in all his Offices, and to turn from all Sin, even the most beloved, unto the whole and strictest Parts of Holiness, *Psalm* 110. 3. There are so many Monuments of the Almighty Power of his Grace this way: Such as *Manasses*, *Paul*, the Thief upon the Cross, and Thou-

Thousands of others, that there is no Room left for any Sinner (bemoaning the greatest Power of spiritual Plagues) in the least to despair, or be dejected; for there is a sovereign Balm in *Gilead*, an Almighty Physician there, who knows no *opprobium Medicorum*, but hath an infallible Remedy, for the most fatal and threatning Maladies. Briefly, he who by his great Power, created the Soul upright at first, can in the Face of all Opposition create the new Heart again; and as by this Power he can in *Regeneration*, lay the Foundation-work of Grace; so by the same, he can gradually carry the begun good Work on unto Perfection, *Phil.* 1. 6. This Topick of the *Fulness* and *Suitableness* of the Mediatory Offices, I have been a little the more full upon, because as 'tis in it self a most agreeable Motive, considering all its Parts; so also, 'tis the Motive which I observe our Lord makes as much use of in the Gospel, as of any other improven by him; as is clear from *Isa.* 61. 1, 2, 3. *Rev.* 3. 17, 18. And therefore must certainly be a most proper Argument to be insisted on towards winning Souls.

The Fourth General *Topick* is, the *obliging Methods* and Ways, by which our Lord executeth the Mediatory Offices, in carrying on the Salvation of Sinners. As, 1. How obliging is it in him to send forth his Ambassadors, and by his Word treat with Rebels. Again, 2. He knowing their Inability to answer and obey the Gospel, as being absolutely dead in Sin, he most kindly directs them to acknowledge their Impotency, and thereupon to ask his quickning and converting Power, by which they may be enabled to obey the two great Gospel Commands relative to Faith and Repentance, *Ezek.* 36. 26, 37.

3. And when once a Sinner comes to be truly sensible of the great Power of spiritual Plagues, and thereupon sincerely to desire and long for more and more of a sensible Day of the Divine Power, towards enabling them in a more distinct and lively Manner to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, and to mourn for Sin, and turn from it; behold how ready our Lord is to meet such returning Prodigals, while yet afar off, and to grant them the Desire of their Soul, *Luke* 15. 20. *Jer.* 31. 18, 19, 20. 4. And if any such *sensible returning Sinner* be greatly discouraged, upon the Account of the greatness of their Sin, and of the hainous and gross Aggravations attending the same; behold, where the Guilt, Power and Spot of Sin is once truly become a Burden; and where the Soul is cordially willing to be beholden unto the imputed Righteousness of a Mediator for Justification; I say, when once Matters stand thus, then our Lord's Voice immediately is, *Isa.* 1. 18. *Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your Sins be as Scarlet, they shall be as white as Snow, though they be red like Crimson, they shall be as Wool.* 5. And when once the good Work is truly begun in Regeneration, behold how pleasantly the Lord by his Spirit, along with his Ordinances and Providences from Time to Time, carrieth it on, until Sin be totally eradicated, and Holiness absolutely perfected, that so the Soul may at the long-run be made meet to be a Partaker of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light, *Psalm* 84. 7. *Col.* 1. 12. All which being considered, what rational thinking Soul is it, that can desire a better qualified, or more *obliging Redeemer*, than what the Lord Jesus Christ is?

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The 5th General *Topick* is, the *greatneſs* of the Salvation it ſelf, which is offered by Chriſt unto Sinners. Which cannot but be great above all finite Conception, if we conſider, that it not only hath in it a perfect Freedom from all Sin and Miſery, and a perfect Conformity unto God, but alſo an Immediate, Full and Eternal Beatifical Viſion and Enjoyment of the Deity; and that in all the three glorious Perſons of the Godhead, and in all the wonderful Perfections of the Divine Nature, as diſplaying themſelves in the great Counſels and Perfections of Creation and Redemption, *Eph.* 5. 26, 27. 1 *John* 3. 2. *Rev.* 22. 4, 5. And indeed conſidering the great Contriver, Purchaſer and Applier of this Salvation, and that 'tis the chief of the Counſels and Works of God, to which all others have been in a great Meaſure ſubordinate, it certainly muſt be true, that any Notions or Ideas which we have, in this dark, imperfect and remote State of the Glory to be revealed, muſt bear very little Proportion unto the real Import and great Extent of the thing it ſelf, 1 *Cor.* 2. 9. But as it is written, *Eye hath not ſeen, nor Ear heard, neither have entered into the Heart of Man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.* All which cries aloud upon rational Man, to fall in with this great Salvation, and thereupon become perfectly and inconceivably Happy.

To all which *Motives*, 6. It may not be improper to ſubjoin the Conſideration, of our Lord's being the *only* Saviour; and of Salvation, its being to be found in none other beſides himſelf. Accordingly we find the Apoſtle *Peter*, in a moſt ſerious and important Sermon unto a great Auditory improving this Argument; *Acts* 4. 12. And which deſerveth Remark, our Lord himſelf a-

mongst his last Words and Directions to his Apostles, plainly commands them to preach, *Mark* 16. 16. *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.* And as to the Truth of the Argument, 'tis certain, that seeing none could satisfie offended Justice, but one equal in Dignity to the Party offended; and seeing no Righteousness can answer the Law, but what is absolutely perfect; and seeing no Power can regenerate or sanctifie Man, dead in Sins and Trespasses, save the Almighty Arm; I say, considering all these, 'tis evident that none other, but the wonderful Person *God-Man*, can possibly prove an All-sufficient and Compleat Saviour, unto finite guilty and impotent Man; and therefore, Christ must be cordially embraced, and received in all his Offices, as the Wisdom and Power of God unto Salvation; otherwise Condemnation by Reason of the Breach of the first Covenant, is absolutely Inevitable. *John* 3. 18. *He that believeth on him, is not condemned; but he that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the Name of the only begotten Son of God.*

The next *Head* falling natively in, after those Motives, is that of *Directions* towards closing aright with the Lord Jesus Christ, as offered in the Gospel.

In relation to which, several Things might be proposed; such as, 1. To assent unto the Truth of the Gospel Accounts of Man's Sin, Misery, and Impotency by Nature. 2. To compare the Blessings purchased by the Second *Adam*, with those lost by the Sin of the first. And, 3. Thereupon to expostulate with our selves concerning the Excellency of this Contrivance of Salvation,

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through a crucified Christ. But all these and many others such like, importing no more upon the Matter, but a serious frequent Meditation upon the foresaid Motives;

I shall therefore proceed to what more immediately and formally belongeth unto practical Directions, in relation to right closing with the Lord Jesus Christ. And on this Head, I must premise, that it seems not to be improper for all Ministers offering *Directions* towards this important Duty, to Preface the same, by declaring particularly to their Hearers, that there are two sorts of Persons, with whom Cases and Questions about right Covenanting with Christ use to be found. 1. Some who only in an *Hypocritical way*; or at most in an overly and indifferent Manner propose the same, and accordingly give Ear unto the Answers, only as to a common, ordinary Piece of Gospel Doctrine, without any serious Concern, or sincere Purpose to fall in with the same. Upon which, all such Persons ought to be plainly told these two Things relative to their Case; as, 1. That whatever they pretend, the Lord knows that they are as yet in Heart, real Despisers of Christ, both in his Person and Offices; and that 'tis not to such that the Directions are chiefly proposed; seeing it is not the Whole but the Sick, that will ever in earnest improve the Physician. Yea, 2. Such ought to be further informed, that the *Offers* of Christ, together with the *Motives* and *Directions* relative to closing with him, instead of doing them good, while thus in Heart *Undervaluers* of the glorious Redeemer, shall only as so many Witnesses against them, add unto their Condemnation. And if this *Plainness* were seriously used at such Times, who knows how much

it might prevent a great deal of Soul-destroying Presumption with a great many, who are ready to think that all the Hearers of the Gospel, are at all Times in Case, and sufficiently prepared for receiving Christ? Never in the least supposing any need of the convincing, humbling and drawing work of the Holy Ghost. Yea this plainness might also by the Divine Blessing prove a mean of affecting deeply such who were concerned in it; and that, as seeing themselves Persons yet far from God, and upon whom the Gospel for the Time is in a great Measure lost, and to whom it is in hazard to prove the savour of Death unto Death, 2 *Cor.* 2. 16.

There are again, 2. On the other Hand, others who from the *Heart* are enquiring, *What shall they do to be saved?* And who are longing for Directions, as the Patient threatned with present Death, longeth for the Prescriptions of the ablest Physician. Now when Matters are thus, and the Soul so affected with a Sense of Sin and Misery, and with the Gospel-report of Christ's Fulness and Suitableness, that no Terms are accounted too hard in order to the obtaining a saving Interest in him, then the following Directions seem highly proper.

As First, To endeavour *clear scriptural Notions* of Faith in Christ Jesus, for while the Soul is confused or dark in this, 'tis impossible either to receive Christ as offered so distinctly, or in receiving him, to have such Comfort, as what ought to attend Believing. This Direction is most clearly imported in Faith's being expressly termed Knowledge, intimating the Necessity of that Grace, its being along with it, *Isa.* 53. 11.

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In order to the attaining unto distinct scriptural Notions of saving Faith in Christ, these Three following Heads must be studied. As, 1. Distinct sound Notions of the glorious *Object* of Faith. 2. Of the *Terms* upon which he is offered in the Gospel. 3. Of the *Acts* of the Soul absolutely necessary unto believing.

Towards conceiving aright the *Object* of Faith, to wit, the Lord Jesus Christ; 'tis clear, that the Soul ought to consider him as the Eternal Son of God, who in the depth of Infinite Wisdom and Love, was condescended on by the adorable Trinity to become Man; and being God-Man in one Person, to suffer the Curse of the broken Law, and perfectly obey the Precepts thereof, that so all the Elect may through his Passive and Active Obedience, not only obtain a compleat Remission of Sins, but also a most perfect Righteousness, intituling them unto Eternal Life, *John* 3. 16. *Rom.* 4. 25.

As for the *Terms* upon which Christ is offered in the Gospel, they are all reducible to these Three; to wit, 1. That he must be above all other Objects, the *Beloved* of the Soul; and indeed considering, that the Fulness of an Infinite God, and the *All-sufficiency* of a Compleat Saviour, are truly to be found in him, 'tis evident, that the rational Soul hath all the ground in the World, to account him the *Pearl of great Price*, and accordingly cordially to sell all in order to the obtaining of him, *Matth.* 13. 45, 46. 2. He must be our only Saviour, importing that we must intirely trust to his Righteousness for our Justification, and to his Grace for our Sanctification, saying from the Heart, that *only* in the Lord have we *Righteousness* and *Strength*, Isa. 45. 24. And so likewise, 3. He

must be our *only Sovereign*; his Law must be cordially chosen for the Rule of our Conversation: So that the whole both of the inward and outward Man, without any reserve, must be subject thereunto; as also our *Persons*, and our *All*, even to Life it self, must be at the disposal of his Providence, to be used by him, for his Glory, as what he seeth meet, *Luke* 14. 26.

The last Head relative to the *Acts* of the Soul, absolutely necessary to Faith; 'tis clear from the Premisses, that first there must be an *assenting* Act, by which the Person solidly believeth the *Truth* of the Gospel-report and Promise, relative to Christ's Incarnation, Death, Satisfaction and Purchase; otherwise the Object can never be aright apprehended, nor the Soul really encouraged to come forward, *Isa.* 45. 24. And so likewise, 2. There must be a *consenting* and *embracing* Act; the Mind apprehending his All-sufficiency and Willingness, as held forth in the Gospel-Offer, the Will must thereupon particularly consent to this way of Justification, Sanctification, and Redemption by a Crucified Christ, and so rest upon him alone as the Wisdom and Power of God for Salvation, *Phil* 3. 8, 9.

These few Heads being a little pondered, some distinct and sound Notions of saving Faith cannot but in part arise in the Soul, which was the first Direction towards right closing with the Lord Jesus Christ; and which if once attained unto, will very much pave the Way for,

The *second Direction*, which is to endeavour great *Soundness of Heart* in closing and covenanting with him. That there are many *unsound* Believers, is beyond all controversy, *Matth.* 25. 8. and that Satan doth his utmost to improve the Deceitfulness

fulneſs of Man's Heart, eſpecially in the matter of our accepting the Lord Jeſus Chriſt (it being ſo much his Intereſt) there is no manner of ground to doubt. And therefore certainly, the utmoſt Care would be taken to be ſincere in a Matter of ſuch great and eternal Conſequence.

This *Heart-ſoundneſs* in cloſing with Chriſt principally conſiſteth in the Soul's being cordially willing of *all* the foreſaid Terms, upon which he is offered: So that, 1. The Perſon from the very Heart dethrones *all other Beloveds*; eſteeming Chriſt the moſt glorious Perſon and excellent Portion of all others in the World, *Phil.* 3. 8. 2. The Perſon from the Heart is abſolutely denied *to all other Saviours*, not truſting in the leaſt to any Righteouſneſs of their own, but intirely to Chriſt's, *Phil.* 3. 9. 3. And ſo likewiſe the ſound Believer is from the Heart pleaſed with Chriſt's *Kingly Office*, deſiring nothing more than Grace to underſtand the true ſpiritual Meaning and Extent of the Law, and thereupon Grace to walk up accordingly, *Pſal.* 119. 33, 34, 35. *Briefly*, Perſons ſoundly covenanting with the Lord Jeſus Chriſt uſe to have much of a holy Jealouſy over their Hearts, putting them on to cry ſeriouſly to the Lord, that he would ſearch and try them, and ſhew them, if there be any ſecret evil Way, or unknown ſinful *Reſerves* lurking in their Souls; and all this they do with a ſincere Deſign to bring forth all Chriſt's Rivals, and ſlay them before his Face, *Pſal.* 139. 23, 24.

If any *ſerious Perſons*, upon hearing theſe two Directions, ſhould object and ſay, that they have been endeavouring both; but that ſtill ſo much Darkneſs, Confuſion, Deadneſs, and Coldneſs of Soul remains with them, that they can neither attain

tain to distinct, nor sound, nor lively closing with the Lord Jesus Christ.

To all such, who have been that way making serious Essays towards this important Gospel-Duty, and who from a real Sense of Spiritual Plagues, are thus complaining, two things ought to be offered for their Encouragement; as, 1. They would be informed, that 'tis God's ordinary way, in bringing in his Elect, to suffer Spiritual Plagues so far to affect them, as to make them, on the one hand, sensible of their own absolute Impotency to turn themselves; and on the other, of their great need of the Divine Almighty Arm to draw and determine their Souls God-ward. All which the Lord most wisely doth, that the whole Praise of Salvation-work may redound unto him. 2. It would also be declared, that 'tis equally God's ordinary way, after he hath once humbled his Elect, under a Sense of the great Power of spiritual Plagues, then next to subdue sensibly the said Plagues; and oftentimes greatly enlarge the Soul, so that Faith, Repentance, and new Obedience, become most pleasant Performances unto them, in respect of what they were at first, *Jer.* 31. 18, 19, 20. And therefore such Persons ought with *Hope* and *holy Confidence* to renew their Essays towards closing with Christ, and to continue wrestling against their spiritual Plagues; crying out, *I believe, Lord help my Unbelief,* Mark 9. 24. and with the Spouse, *Draw me, and I will run after thee,* Song 1. 4.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

A Sermon according to the Textual Form *is offered, for the Illustration of that Method of Preaching. And in regard* distinct Notions *of Sincerity and Hypocrisy in Religion may be of considerable use in treating of many Gospel-Subjects; therefore those important Words contained* 2 Tim. 3. 5. *are insisted upon as the Foundation of the Sermon.*

HAving now discoursed the *Homiletical* Method of Preaching, I come next to consider that Method ordinarily termed *Textual*; which is so called, because Sermons composed after this Form, are not only regulate by the *Text* with respect to their Matter, as consisting of the whole Parts of the Verse, but also with respect to their Method, as following the very same Order of the Truths contained in the Text. So that such Sermons usually spend the whole Verse, and discourse the several Points of Doctrine therein, and that exactly according to the Line and Thread of the Text.

Before I proceed to any *Remarks* upon these various Methods, with respect to their different Usefulness and Excellency, and in what cases each of them may be proper; I shall first, as on the former Head, offer a *Scheme* of a Sermon after this *Textual Form.* And considering how much the right preaching of many Gospel-Doctrines doth depend upon distinct *Scriptural Notions* of these two general Heads, to wit, *Hypocrisy* and *Sincerity* in Religion; I shall therefore chuse for Subject these mate-

material and comprehensive Words of the Apostle *Paul* to *Timothy*.

Second Epistle to *Tim.* 3. 5. *Having a Form of Godliness, but denying the Power thereof; from such turn away.*

For Introduction, Division, and Explication, I humbly conceive what followeth may serve.

All godly and faithful Ministers being deeply concerned for the Glory of Christ, the Honour of Religion, and Salvation of immortal Souls; and knowing how much *Hypocrisy* in Religion is *Antipods* unto, and quite subversive of all those important Ends; they accordingly set themselves to unfold the great Sin and Danger thereof, and thereupon seriously warn their People to beware of the same.

And so we find the faithful Apostle declaring to *Timothy* two things, and accordingly exhorting him, 1. That there are a great many Persons living secretly under the Power of manifold gross Sins, who yet have a Form, *i. e.* an external methodical way of living, which hath a *Shew* and *Appearance* of true Religion in it. 2. But withall, that the same Persons in the mean time are absolutely Strangers to the powerful quickening Principle of spiritual Life, and to the sanctifying constraining Influences of Grace, which produce true Holiness in Heart and Life, with all Persons truly regenerate. Upon which, in the next place, he exhorteth him to turn away from them, meaning, that both he himself, and all the other Members of the Church, ought so to detest and abominate the Hypocrisy and Naughtiness of such Persons, (more especially when they become Seducers of others) as to shun all intimate unnecessary Communion and Fellowship with them.

Now

Now according to the Line and Order of the Text, there is ground for a threefold Doctrinal Observation.

1. *That most wicked Persons may have a Form of Godliness.* 2. *That however the Hypocrite is willing of an outward Form of Religion, yet in Heart he hath a secret Contrariety to the Power and Practice thereof.* 3. *That when once Persons Hypocrisy in Religion comes to be notour and evident, they ought then to be discountenanced, and in so far had in great abomination.*

In discoursing the first of those *Doctrines*, which is evident from the Connection of the preceding Verses with the Text; all that seems proper (considering the subsequent *Observations*) is, only, 1. To prove and confirm the Truth thereof; and 2. To shew whence it is that there is such a *Consistency* betwixt great *Wickedness* and a *Form* of Godliness.

As to what concerneth the *Confirmation* of the Doctrine, there are, 1. So many Scripture Assertions all importing this Truth, such as *Prov.* 30. 12. *Matth.* 23. 23, to 30. and 25. 2, 8. and, 2. So many Scripture Instances and Examples, such as *Jehu*, *Judas*, *Herod*, *Ananias*, *Saphira*, and many others, that there is no room left for the least doubting the Truth thereof.

And for clearing the *second Head*, if we consider that the whole *Externals* of Religion, such as Head-Knowledge, historical Faith, Attendance upon the Ordinances, customary Prayer, communicating, and other seeming Good Works of Justice, Piety and Charity, all which make up the Form or Shew of Godliness; I say, if it be considered, that even all those may be where, 1. There is not the least *Principle* of sanctifying Grace towards the producing of one good Thought, as is clear in the Case

Case of *Paul* in his unconverted Estate, *Phil.* 3. 4, 5, 6. And, 2. That all those may be where Sin is in its absolute *reigning Power* and Dominion, and the Person secretly living in the habitual Love and Practice of the grossest Abominations, as is evident from the Context, and from *Matth.* 23. 28. *Isa.* 1. 10, to 20. Yea, 3. That all these Externals in Religion may be only used and kept up as a Covert and Cloak unto a Tract and Course of secret Wickedness: So that were it not for the sake of some base carnal selfish Ends, the Person would lay aside the very Form of Religion it self, *Matth.* 23. 1, 4. 2 *Tim.* 4. 10. All which being considered, it may soon appear clearly whence even the most wicked Persons may have a Form of Godliness.

The *Application* of this Doctrine runs in one Inference, to wit, That no Person value himself simply upon the account of a Form of Godliness; seeing that many such may be whited Sepulchres, which within are full of Rottenness and all manner of Uncleanness.

In discoursing the Second Observation, these following Heads seem proper to be cleared, 1. To shew whence 'tis that *Hypocrites*, tho' absolutely void of sanctifying Grace, yet are willing of a form of Religion. 2. To hold out *how far* a Hypocrite may advance in a form of Godliness. 3. To evince that there still remaineth, even with the most advanced Hypocrite, a secret contrariety to the Power and Practice of true Godliness. All which Heads (being the principal Matter of the Text) as on the one Hand, nothing of their substantial Import would be omitted; so on the other, considering, the *Textual Method* requireth, that these Truths be only handled

dled as they ſtand in the Text, therefore great Succinctneſs and Brevity would alſo be ſtudied. That ſo one Sermon may go through much of the whole Matter contained in the Verſe or Verſes choſen for a Subject: Except where the ſame doth contain a more than ordinary *multiplicity* and variety of Purpoſes.

Accordingly to return to the firſt of the *Three* Preceding General Heads. Let us conſider that *Hypocrites*, though unregenerate, yet are along with the whole of Mankind endowed, 1. With a natural Conſcience bearing ſome Impreſſions of God, and of Moral Good and Evil, and of a Day of Judgment to come; and thereupon are willing of ſome Form of Godlineſs, *Rom.* 2. 14, 15. 2. Being Born, Baptized and Educate in a Goſpel-Church, they are ſo far impreſſed with the Notions of revealed Religion (there being nothing contradictory to Reaſon in them) that thereupon they comply not only with a Form of natural but of revealed Religion, *Micah* 3. 11. *Matth.* 25. 7, 8. 3 *Hypocrites* being endowed with an innate Principle of Self-Preſervation, and ſometimes with terrible Threatnings from Conſcience in the Day of Trial and Affliction; they are thereupon not only willing, but fond to have ſome Form of Godlineſs to anſwer and ſatisfy their Conſciences againſt a dying Hour, *Pſal.* 78. 34.

To clear the *ſecond Head*, reſpecting the great *Advances* Hypocrites may make in a Form of Godlineſs; let us conſider, 1. That the whole *adorning Externals* of Religion (named upon the firſt Doctrine) may be remarkably with them; ſuch as *Head-Knowledge*, *hiſtorical Faith*, *punctual Attendance on the Ordinances*, *cuſtomary Prayer*, *external Communicating*, *perfect Blameleſneſs* and *great Morality*

lity as to the Eye of the World in point of Conversation, *Luke* 18. 11, 12. *Phil.* 3. 5, 6. 2. A great many of the *common Operations* of the Spirit (and for the time most promising) may also be with hypocritical Persons; such as *Convictions*, *Fears* of Wrath, *warm Motions*, promising Resolutions towards Christ and Religion, considerable external *Reformations*; as is clear from the Instances of *Saul*, *Ahab*, *Felix*, *Herod.* Yea, 3. Behold how near an *Approach* to the Kingdom of Grace the Hypocrite may make in several Attainments yet higher than those; such as, considerable *Delight* and *Joy* in Hearing, and at times some passing *high* and *honourable* Thoughts of Christ, and of the Happiness of his People; considerable Satisfaction and Enlargement in Prayer, yea Frequency in the same, together with Fasting; all which, together with several Acts of Mortification and Self-denial, towards the making up a Righteousness of their own, may be found with unregenerate Professors, as is clear from the Attainments of the *stony-ground* Hearers, *Balaam*, the *Pharisee*, and the great *Sufferings* the Apostle supposeth Hypocrites may undergo, 1 *Cor.* 13. 1, 2, 3.

But that which is most astonishing of all is, that unregenerate Persons may even, attain to *very clear Views* of the difference betwixt the Essentials and the Externals of Religion, and be able to describe to others the Nature and Import of Sincerity; yea for the time seem to be under a considerable Inclination and Perswasion towards falling in with the same. Thus Matters stood with the *discreet Scribe*, *Mark* 12. 32, 33, 34. Whom yet our Lord doth not acknowledge to have been actually translated into the Kingdom of Grace, but only not to have been far from it. And so also in part, Matters

were

were thus with *Agrippa*. All which being seriously considered, there is no doubt great ground for all to cry out with a holy Concern, *How saw then shall be saved?* as also to acknowledge that Man's Heart is a great Depth.

The *Third* General Head will also be clear, if we consider, That all Hypocrites being unregenerate, they must certainly be under the reigning Power of natural Enmity against God and true Godliness, as the Apostle declareth all Men by Nature to be, *Rom.* 8. 7. And if so, then 'tis clear, that whatever Advances such Persons may make in the Externals of Religion, that yet still there remaineth a strong secret Contrariety unto the superlative Love of God, the Strictness, Spirituality, and Extent of the holy Divine Law, and unto Self-Denial of our own Righteousness in the Matter of Justification. *Briefly*, natural Darkness, Unbelief, Pride, Enmity, Obstinacy being unsubdued in all Persons Strangers to Regeneration, 'tis impossible there can either be saving Knowledge, sound Faith, true Repentance, sincere Love, or holy Obedience with any such Souls; and consequently, they will both in Heart and Practice deny the Power of Godliness; for no Man ever yet gathered Figs or Grapes from Thistles.

The principal *Uses* of this Doctrine are these two: First, It informs us clearly of the Difference betwixt *Hypocrisy* and *Sincerity* in Religion. The *former* consisting of an unregenerate Man's making Profession of Religion, and adorning the same with Head-Knowledge, historical Faith, Attendance on the Ordinances, customary Prayer, external communicating, together with a moral and blameless Conversation before the World; all which make up a most specious Form of Godliness.

But withall, in the mean time, hath a secret Heart-*Enmity* at God and his Law, because of their Holiness; and an Aversation from Christ, because of his requiring the Denial of Man's own Righteousness, and an allowed Contrariety unto new-Obedience, because of the right Principles, Motives, and Ends; to wit, the Love of God, Respect to the Divine Command, and an Eye to his Glory; which are absolutely necessary unto the same, *Acts* 8. 13. compar'd with Verse 21. The *latter*, to wit, Sincerity, consisting of a Man's becoming truly religious, and that by virtue of a powerful supernatural Principle of spiritual Life; which Principle introducing the saving Knowledge of God in Christ into the Mind, the Will accordingly embraceth God so discovered, as the chief Good; accepting the Lord Jesus Christ in all his Offices, in order to Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption; and is thereupon constrained from Love to a sincere universal Course of new Obedience, *Luke* 19. 6, 8. From all which 'tis clear why the Apostle in the Text describeth true Godliness, as having a Power in it, which the meer Form thereof absolutely wants: Meaning, that a Soul truly acquainted with sincere, serious Godliness, is one who hath been blessed with the quickening, illuminating, humbling, drawing, Soul-determining, and sanctifying Power of saving Grace; whereby the whole *Essentials* of Religion, such as saving Knowledge, sound Faith, sincere Repentance, superlative Love, Spirituality in Duties of Worship, the Hatred of every false Way, and a cordial Respect to all God's Commands, are truly to be found with the Person, *Song* 1. 12. *Psal.* 119. 128.

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The *second* Inference from this Doctrine, is, that it calls aloud upon all Persons to beware of concluding *Sincerity* in Religion from the *greatest Advances* they possibly can make in a Form thereof. And to cause this Inference to come the closer home, more especially considering the great Pride, Conceit, and Deceitfulness, which are naturally in Man's Heart in the Matter of Religion; these *two Heads* seem proper Enlargements upon this Branch of the Application.

First to make a *rational Account*, how even *Hypocrites*, tho' unregenerate, may make such great *Advances* in religious Matters. 2. To evince and clear that these high Advances are still short of a saving Work, and *specifically different* from Sincerity in Religion.

Towards clearing the First, let us consider, That, 1*st*. 'Tis plain from Scripture, Reason, and Experience, that *unregenerate* Persons may have the Advantage of these *four* Means and Helps, from which a *Form* of Godliness may very easily proceed: As, 1. A good Education in their Youth. 2. May live under a close and faithful Gospel-Dispensation. 3. From these, considerable Head-knowledge, both as to the Principles and Precepts of true Religion, may be found with them. 4. To all these may be superadded the various common Motions of the Spirit improving all the former, 2 *Chron.* 24. 2, 17, 18. Upon all which, 2*dly*. 'Tis likewise obvious, that these four conjunctly impressing the Conscience, cannot fail of producing some considerable Effects; such as, something of *Complacency* in the Ordinances, a daily *Calling* upon the Lord, a general *Assent* unto Gospel-Truths, a professed *Reliance* upon Christ for Salvation, an external *Conformity* unto the Letter of the Law,

and that as to Duties of both Tables, *Isa.* 48. 1, 2. *Ezek.* 33. 31, 32. Yea more, considering that unrenewed Persons may at times share deeply of the common Motions of the Holy Ghost; what should hinder, but that very promising-like Convictions, Fears, Impressions, Resolutions, yea and considerable Reformations also, should be found with them, as is clear in the several Instances already named, but especially in the Case of wicked *Herod*, Mar. 6. 20. *For* Herod *feared* John, *knowing that he was a just Man and an holy, and observed him, and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.*

As for the *second Head*, to wit, that the highest Advances of unregenerate Men in Religion, are *specifically* different from a saving Work, and from Sincerity in Religion; the Truth of it cannot but considerably appear from the Premisses: For as no Stream can rise higher than the Fountain from whence it comes; so the highest and noblest *Principle* with the Hypocrite being either the Impressions of a Deity, and of moral Good and Evil upon the natural Conscience; or at most some passing Affections (so to speak) upon the surface of the Soul, raised by the Spirit of God upon hearing some affecting Gospel-Doctrines; 'tis evident that neither of these Principles (the *Nature* continuing still unrenewed) can possibly produce any of the Fruits of true Holiness, which accompany Salvation; for these necessarily require the saving Knowledge of God, true Faith in Jesus Christ, and the superlative Love of God in him, as the true genuine Principles from which all gracious sincere Acts of true Holiness can possibly flow; *Jer.* 31. 34. *Heb.* 11. 6. 1 *Cor.* 13. 3.

Briefly,

Briefly; All the abovementioned *Advances*, which may be with Hypocrites, being actually consistent with secret natural Enmity, and Confidence in a Person's own Righteousness and Strength, and with the allowed habitual Love and Practice of some secret known Sins; 'tis more than clear that they can have nothing of *true Gospel-Holiness* in them. For if any thing be certain in revealed Religion, 'tis, That, 1. A superlative Love to God in Christ; and, 2. An intire and sole Reliance upon Christ's Righteousness in order to Justification; and, 3. Upon his Strength towards Performance of Duties; and, 4. That the Hatred of all known Sin, and a cordial Respect to the whole of the Divine Law; are the four great characteristical Pieces of sincere Religion and true Gospel-Holiness. Upon all which it followeth, as a most solid and undeniable Conclusion, that the most *perfect Advances* in the Externals of Religion constituting the most compleat Form thereof, can never be sufficient Evidence of Sincerity therein. And therefore nothing can be more the Duty and Interest of all Persons professing Godliness, than to make sure, that they are indeed become new Creatures, and that old things are past away, and that all things are become new, 2 *Cor.* 5. 17. In fine, the chief, yea and in some respects the *only Remedy* against Hypocrisy, and the true and solid Foundation of Sincerity in Religion, is Regeneration, *Matth.* 12. 33.

And therefore the *grand Direction* against Hypocrisy must certainly be, to cry seriously to God for the great Blessing of the new Heart: For Regeneration introducing saving Knowledge into the Soul, instantly God in Christ is seen to be the supream and chief Good, and Sin seen to be the greatest

Evil; and thereupon God so discovered comes to be loved above all, and all known Sin had in Abomination: which are the two great essential Ingredients of Sincerity.

As for the *third Observation*, it principally requireth, that the abominable Nature and dangerous Consequence of Hypocrisy in Religion should be open'd up.

In order to which let us, 1. Consider that there is a *threefold* Hypocrisy: 1. A secret and *close* Hypocrisy, which is in a great measure unknown to the Person's self, *Matth.* 25. 7. Which Kind, altho' it want the great Aggravation of *Resolution* and *Design*; yet in so far as such do profess Religion, while yet in the mean time they are in heart Enemies to God and true Godliness, and remain Despisers of Christ's Righteousness, and withal are living habitually in the Love and Practice of some secret Sins, they cannot but be most abominable Persons unto the Thrice Holy God, who can never delight in a Soul till there be Truth in the inward Parts, *Psal.* 51. 6.

2. There is *gross* Hypocrisy, which is, when Persons conscious to themselves of their inward Wickedness and Naughtiness; yet for base carnal *selfish Ends*, make a great Profession of Religion, that so they may have the Favour of such a Party, and accomplish their Designs among them. Such an one was *Jehu*, as also *Ananias* and *Saphira*, who had conspired to dissemble grosly with respect to the Price of their Possessions. This kind of Hypocrisy hath so much of a bold mocking and daring of an Omniscient, Holy, and Jealous God, implied in it, as well as of great Dissimulation to Man and to the Church, that no Words can sufficiently describe the heinous and horrid Guilt, which

which must infallibly accompany the same. And therefore no wonder if, besides the most solemn and severe Reproof, which the Apostle *Peter* gave unto the foresaid Persons, a Holy and Jealous God did so immediately and signally testify his fiery Indignation from Heaven against them, *Acts* 5. 1, to 10.

3. There is yet further a *pestilentious* and infecting Hypocrisy; which is, when Persons not only for some more private Ends act an hypocritical Part; but with a Design to enter some publick Station, and therein to seduce and corrupt others so far as they have Access. Which Kind, (as all Hypocrisy) is most abominable, being directly contrary unto the Nature of the God of Truth, and a real Mocking of the Divine Omniscience, so more especially when it arrives at the height of converting Religion into a Cloak of Wickedness, and as being designed as a Handle to ensnare and destroy others. And therefore no wonder if the Apostle particularly exhort, that from all such *we should turn away.*

As for the Difficulty in discovering Hypocrites, no doubt 'tis great; yea no Man can search the Heart; and I suppose none will now pretend unto any extraordinary Spirit of discerning: Yet upon a little accurate Observation, it will be often found, that *unregenerate Men*, in the midst of their highest Pretences to Religion, do evidence in the Tract of their Way, either, 1. An observable Aversion unto strict and spiritual Godliness, dropping now and then some bitter Reflections upon such as study the same, and shunning all Subjects in Conversation that have any tendency thereunto, *Song* 5. 7. *John* 12. 5, 6. Or, 2. A *predominant Love* unto the World, pursuing it with Heart and

Soul, and that (at times) by Means which the sincere Fearer of God could not venture upon; and withall causing Religion, through the whole Tract of their Way, to truckle unto their Worldly Designs, except in so far as is absolutely necessary to keep up a Name before the World, 2 *Tim.* 4. 10. Or, 3. Some *unsubdued strong Passions*, so that upon very ordinary Provocations, they frequently show so much of Pride, Anger, Malice, Revenge, and that in such an inveterate continued manner, as proclaimeth them void of that Grace, which crucifieth the Flesh, with its Affections and Lusts, *Gal.* 5. 24. Accordingly *Joash* soon appeared in his own Colours after the Death of *Jehoiada*, 2 *Chron.* 24. 2. & 17. 21, 22.

As for Persons hypocrising in more *publick Stations* (like those in this Context) as oftentimes their Works do manifest what kind of Persons they are; so likewise such of them as carry more smoothly, it will be frequently found upon a close Observation, that so much of *self-seeking Vainglory*, *Overlineſs*, and *Formality* appeareth in their publick religious Performances, as sufficiently declareth what they are; as also such an Estrangement unto that spiritual, close, searching and serious manner of dispensing the things of God (which useth to be found with godly experienc'd Men) that 'tis plain, that while they speak of and commend Religion to others, they themselves, as the Apostle here declareth, are Persons practically denying the Power thereof; and therefore ought in a special manner to be discountenanced and turned away from.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

The Occasional Method *being discourſed, ſome Remarks are offered, relative to the peculiar Advantages of the ſeveral Methods propoſed. Upon which enſueth the* Third *General Direction, reſpecting a* Suitableneſs *in Diction and Dialect unto a Goſpel Diſpenſation. To which is ſubjoined the* Fourth *in relation to that Seriouſneſs of Frame, which becometh the Oracles of God.*

HAving now at ſome length, diſcourſed both the Homiletical and Textual Method of Preaching, there remaineth only a few Words relative unto the Third Branch, to wit,

The Method which I termed *Occaſional.* By which we are not ſo much to underſtand any Method abſolutely different from the former two; as, ſome occaſional Alterations upon the two foreſaid Methods, according as Miniſters are providentially at Times called thereunto: Which Alterations muſt be much left to the Prudence and Diſcretion of Miniſters themſelves.

As, 1. When a Miniſter is called to preach before an Audience of *Judicious* and *Great Men,* whoſe Senſe, Capacity, and Genius doth not ſo well agree with any Diſcourſe, but what is; 1. Moſt *Important* in its Matter: And, 2. *Pertinent* in its Scope in relation to the Auditory and Occaſion. 3. Moſt *Compact* and Succinct in its Method. 4. Moſt *ſolid, rational* and convincing in the

the whole strain of the Discourse. And, 5. Absolutely free of all Digressions, Repetitions, tedious Enlargements, and the like. 'Tis thereupon clear, that in such Sermons several Forms used in Point of Method, in other Discourses (in Consideration of meaner Capacities) may be laid aside.

Accordingly in Confirmation of this Occasional Method, 'tis most remarkable that *Paul* being called to preach before King *Agrippa* and *Festus*, Acts 26. He most wisely, after a most courteous and obliging Preface, *ver.* 2, 3. argueth the Truth of the Christian Religion, from his extraordinary and miraculous Conversion by a Voice from Heaven, as going upon Designs of Persecution, from *Jerusalem* to *Damascus*. And upon this Subject he principally insisteth, laying aside in a great Measure all other Purposes and Arguments, as knowing they would neither be so pleasant, nor so affecting unto such an Auditory; as what an Account of an immediate extraordinary Voice, and glorious Vision from Heaven, would be. And therefore having briefly shown this extraordinary Providence, to be most consistent with the acknowledged Doctrines of *Moses* and the Prophets, he sums up his Sermon by a prudent charitable Insinuation of the Christian Religion upon King *Agrippa*; *alledging* (as it were) rather than reasoning the Faith thereof upon him. All which we find to have been very acceptable and agreeable to the Audience, *ver.* 25, 26, 27, to the end. So that, upon the whole the principal Rule to be observed in this Case, is, that, after a prudent Choice of some *pertinent Subject* adjusted to the Auditory, there be a succinct massy Collection made of some of the most *material*

material Truths relative to that Subject; and only such of these chosen, as most nearly concern the Conviction and Edification of such Persons: And that the whole Purposes be all so rationally digested, solidly connected, and distinctly delivered, as shall oblige Judicious Hearers to acknowledge that strong Sense from infallible Scripture and solid Reason hath been delivered unto them: And that as to the Appositeness of the Matter and Method, the Preacher hath indeed chosen acceptable Words, and set them in order, *Eccles.* 12. 9, 10.

And thus, the same *Directions* will hold upon several other like Publick Occasions, when Ministers are providentially trusted with some extraordinary Auditories, and special Providences conveening the same. With respect to the right managing of which, after all the General Rules which can possibly at a distance be proposed; a great deal must still be left to the *Prudence* of the Ministers who are so called: Who from the Quality of the Auditory, and Specialities of the occasion, must take their Measures accordingly. Only it would always be remembred, that in the most elaborate and polite Discourses, the speaking faithfully and singly for God, and closely home unto Conscience, so as the just Authority and Reputation of the Gospel may be maintained, is the most proper and effectual Way for Ministers approving themselves both to God and Man. For, however it may be most proper at Times, according to the Rules of undeniable Prudence to introduce with the Prophet *Nathan*, some more close and searching Truths, by such as are more parabolical and remote; yet still before the Gospel leave Conscience, all ought to know

know one way or another (so far as they are concerned in the Truths preached) that they are the Men, 2 *Sam.* 12. 1, to 8. *Acts* 4. 10, 11. *Acts* 24. 24, 25.

Concerning these several Methods of Preaching the Gospel; if any should enquire, which of them is the most proper and preferable?

The Answer shall be given in the following *Remarks* (as was promised) upon the foresaid Methods.

First, 'Tis indeed owned that the *Homiletical* Method is that, which hath been for a long Time much used in the Reformed Churches both at home and abroad. And no doubt when a Minister is resolved, to discourse some one principal Gospel Doctrine somewhat fully, *à Radice ad Ramos*, in that Case, this Method hath its peculiar Advantages; as giving full access to the greatest Enlargements, which directly relate unto the principal Truth.

But, *Secondly*, The *Textual Method*, as, 'tis of late obtaining more and more Ground both abroad and at home; so it must be acknowledged, that Sermons after that Form are peculiarly enriched with a far greater *Variety* of Purposes and Gospel-Truths, than what the former Method tends unto. So that one *Textual* Sermon (where there hath been any considerable Diligence and Accuracy in Study) may discourse the principal Matter of a very full and complex Text; and therein most pleasantly and profitably entertain the Hearers with a great measure and variety of *Materia Evangelica*. Providing only that according to the Rules of this Textual Method, every Truth in the Verse be only considered *eadem Ratione*, or under the same particular Notion and Respect in which

which it ſtands in that Text. And withal, if its Scope be accordingly made the Rule and Aim of any brief Explication or Application inſiſted upon in diſcourſing the ſame. Yea more where theſe Things are obſerved, it muſt further be owned, that ſuch Preachers do indeed keep very cloſe by the Matter and Method of the Original Delivery of Goſpel Truths unto the Church of God.

And perhaps there would be no great Miſtake, if it ſhould be aſſerted, that if a Miniſter in enlarging upon any particular Doctrinal Obſervation, keep cloſe by the Scope of the ſame; and only chooſe ſuch Heads as are material and proper unto the Explication and Application thereof, that in that Caſe he ſhall find that he ſtands in need of a whole Verſe, if not oftentimes of two or more for his Text. And finally, not to ſay more in Commendation of this Textual Method, were the Voices of the more Judicious among the Hearers, but allowed to determine this Matter, they would very ſoon declare (as their Practice oftentimes upon Occaſions doth confirm) that a variety of maſſy important Truths, with a few diſtinct Explicatory Thoughts, and a ſententious home Application, is the true Method and grand Mean upon Man's part, towards the engaging both the Ears and Hearts of the Children of Men unto the Love and Obedience of the Goſpel. To which purpoſe, 'tis obſervable, that when the Holy Ghoſt commendeth *Solomon* as being a *wiſe* Preacher; one of the ſpecial Grounds of the Commendation is, that he ſought out, and ſet in order many *Proverbs*. By which Proverbs, 'tis known we are to underſtand *compendious excelling Sentences*, or Similitudes, which for their Wiſ-

dom,

dom, Weight and Excellency bear rule over others. For so much the Original Word משלי שלמה *Mishle Shelemoth* importeth in it.

And as for the Usefulness of the *Occasional* Method, 'tis plain that there are several *Seasons*, such as when Ministers are called, to preach before some extraordinary Audience, or upon some particular Occasions, such as Parliaments, Courts of Circuit, Election of Magistrates, Assemblies or Synods, Fasting and Thanksgiving Days; I say, at such Times, 'tis evident that the *Occasional* Method, so far as it respecteth the Choice of a suitable Subject, and a prudent Collection of some important apposite Truths to be distinctly delivered, in acceptable Words, is what ought to be much regarded upon such providential Calls.

And thus now the Second *General Direction*, is discoursed, which respected *Method* in Preaching. In Treating of which, I have been the more particular, purely out of respect to *Substantial* and *distinct* Preaching. It being undeniable, that these Two Properties are of great Consequence in the Dispensation of the Gospel. For, however on the one Hand, it must always be acknowledged, that even after a *Paul* hath planted, and an *Apollos* watered, that the Blessing and Increase, doth absolutely depend upon the Spirits being poured down from on high: Yet also on the other, it must still be equally owned that Ministers stirring up the Grace and Gifts of God in them: So as (with the Prophet *Ezekiel*) to cause their Sermons to become as a lovely Song, and as one that playeth skilfully upon an Instrument; as this I say is at all Times Ministers Duty (according to the Measure of Gifts bestowed upon them) so likewise it far more advanceth the Satisfaction

tisfaction of the People and Reputation of the Gospel, than what any overly confused Collections, or harsh and disagreeable Method of Preaching, can ever possibly do.

The *Third General Direction* to be observed in Preaching the Gospel is, that all Things in the *Expression* and *Utterance* tending most to Edification, be particularly consulted. To which Purpose, I may at least allude unto *Solomon*'s Words, *Prov.* 25. 11. *A Word fitly spoken, is like Apples of Gold in Pictures of Silver.*

In discoursing this *Direction,* it cannot be imagined that any thing like a Commendation of the affected *enticing Words* of Mans Wisdom, condemned by the Apostle, can be here intended: More especially, considering how much I have said against the same in the preceeding Chapters. But what is really designed in this Place, is only to touch at some Things relative to Expression and Utterance which tend to Edification.

In clearing of which, I shall sum them up to these Four Heads. As, 1. *Clearness.* 2. *Pertinency.* 3. *Massiness* or Import. And, 4. *Gravity* in Diction and Dialect.

By Clearness, I understand, 1. Chooſing of intelligible Terms, which are understood by the Audience preached unto; for if not so, a Minister may as well (in so far) speak in an unknown Tongue; quite contrary to the grand Design of Edification, 1 *Cor.* 14. 19. 2. A *Distinctness* in Expression, which ariseth from a proper Methodizing of the Purposes handled, and of the Words and Terms used in expressing the same. For oftentimes Terms sufficiently plain in themselves, by reason of a bad Construction or Situation, may render the Sentence considerably Blind and Obscure.

Obscure. The contrary of which ought to be much studied, as tending considerably to commend and adorn the Gospel in its own Place, *Neh.* 8. 8.

And so likewise by *Pertinency*, is not only intended the shunning of all improper unsavoury Terms, Phrases, Similies, and that whether they be too flat, or too high, but on the other Hand, a choosing of such as are evidently proper and congruous to the Nature of the Subject or Purposes insisted upon. For as there are many *Synonymous* Words and Phrases, so it must be acknowledged, that even amongst these that are equally Plain and Clear, there is a very considerable Difference, with respect to their Pertinency to such and such Purposes; and yet at the same Time may in ordinary and vulgar Speech, signifie the same thing. Accordingly let us search the Book of the *Proverbs*, and there shall be found a peculiar Pertinency and Suitableness in the Terms and Phrases used, unto the Nature and Scope of the Truths designed by them. So that all of them may be well said, to be acceptable Words and fitly spoken.

Again by *Massiness* we are to understand, Significancy and Import; which is, 1. When the Terms and Phrases chosen are really Material, containing much in them. 2. When Truths are expressed in a compendious Way; so that along with Plainness, much Matter is advanced in few Words, every Sentence bringing (as it were) something New with it; but withal keeping still close by the Nature and Scope of the principal Subject or Doctrine. Briefly, a rich important Text natively furnishing the Preacher with several great Truths of Moment and Consequence in Religi-

on,

on, and which lye near the grand Designs of the Gospel, to wit, Conversion and Edification; when these Truths I say are so well digested, and significantly expressed, as to make a pleasant Mixture of great Clearness, and yet of great Comprehension at the same Time; such Discourses, cannot fail of being substantial Gospel Sermons. As a Proof and Illustration of all which, who can sufficiently admire *John* the *Baptist*'s Sermon, *Matth.* 3. 7, to 13? Or our Lord's upon the Mount: *Matth.* 5. Yea, and that suppose he had proceeded no further than to the Declaration of those Truths, contained in the first Twelve Verses of that Chapter.

The Last Head is that of *Gravity* in Diction and Style, which is certainly most becoming and proper unto the Dispensation of the Gospel; which is appointed for the setting of *Life* and *Death* before the Children of Men. By which Gravity I no ways intend any debasing Meanness or Flatness of Style, but such solid weighty Speech and Dialect as becometh the Oracles of God. For as nothing can be more unsuitable unto an Ambassador of Christ, than a vain Pedantick volage Affectation of nice Words, so on the other Hand, the using a considerable Mixture of *Scriptural Terms, Phrases* and *Style*, where the same natively fall in, and that along with the most instructive, significant and emphatical Terms, used in sound and plain Divinity, must certainly tend very much to commend the Preaching of the Gospel. And hence as the *Form of sound Words*, is particularly recommended unto Ministers, so we find *big swelling Words* justly taken Notice of, as a Character of the false Teachers and Seducers, who had no Impression or Concern at Heart with the Do-

 ctrines,

ctrines, which they preached unto others, 2 *Tim.* 1, 13. *Jude* 16.

The Fourth of the General Directions, towards proper and faithful Preaching of the Gospel, is, that a *Suitableness of Frame* becoming the Oracles of God, and proper unto the great Import and Consequence of the Truths of the glorious Gospel, be much endeavoured in dispensing the same.

That all Christians, even the most *Private*, stand obliged not only to Sincerity, but Liveliness in their religious Duties, is undeniable; and if so, then certainly Ministers of the Gospel much more. And they, as at all Times, so more especially in Preaching; because then, their Seriousness and Liveliness will not only glorifie God, but by the Divine Blessing adorn and commend the Gospel to the Souls of their Hearers. And therefore the Apostle *Paul* particularly exhorted *Timothy* to stir up the Gift of God in him, 1 *Tim.* 4. 14. So that all the Graces and Gifts, which God hath freely bestowed upon his Ministers, and which by his Call to the Ministry, they have access to improve, ought to be stirred up and set on Work for his Glory, and the Good of Souls.

This Seriousness and Liveliness of Frame in Preaching, no Man of Sense or Religion will confine it, to the *outward Expressions* thereof in Tears, or other such External Evidences of Affection and Vehemency of Spirit. For though it must indeed be owned, that the Apostle by the Inspiration of the Holy Ghost, doth particularly take Notice of his warning those he preached unto, with *Tears*, *Acts* 20. 31. As also that our Lord *wept* over *Jerusalem* in holding forth their Barrenness under the Means of Grace, *Luke* 19. 41.

41. Yet ſtill it muſt be acknowledged on the other Hand, that there are many great and worthy Miniſters of Chriſt, who are deeply ſerious in Preaching the Goſpel, whoſe Livelineſs of Frame wants thoſe outward Expreſſions of it.

And therefore, as all whoſe Tears over their People do indeed proceed from a ſerious ſpiritual Concern for the Advancement of the Glory of God, the Honour of the Mediator, and the Converſion and Edification of precious immortal Souls, are to be approven; ſo likewiſe are all, whoſe Compoſure and Gravity in Deliverance, ſoundneſs of Doctrine, cloſeneſs of Reaſoning, importunity in Pleading and Exhorting, doth beſpeak them to be Men who have their Maſters Work and Glory at Heart.

All which deſerveth ſo much the more Conſideration, that a ſerious Miniſterial Frame, is a thing ſo *Spiritual* and *Secret*, that it is hard for any ſave the Heart-ſearching Eye to judge poſitively concerning the ſame.

But ſtill after all theſe Cautions, that the thing it ſelf ought to be, to wit, a ſerious lively *Concern* of Spirit with all Miniſters, for the Succeſs of the Goſpel, and the Accompliſhments of the grand Deſigns thereof, is indiſputable. And therefore as all ſuch would wiſh, to look, and ſpeak, and reaſon, as becometh *Ambaſſadors* of Chriſt, and like thoſe who *Travail* as in Birth and Pain, till Chriſt be formed in their Hearers, and as thoſe who are ſent out not to Trifle with, but to *compel* Sinners to come in: Let them ſeriouſly endeavour before they come to Pulpit, ſuch deep Impreſſions of the Divine Majeſty, ſuch *Views* of the Glory and Excellency of Chriſt, ſuch Sentiments of Immortal Souls and Eternal Concerns,

and finally such a solid Belief of the infallible Certainty, and Truth of the Gospel Doctrines which they are to preach, as will by the Blowings of the North and South Wind, set their Souls and Spirits a going in a most spiritual, lively, and enlarged Manner, in their Publick Ministerial Performances amongst their People.

But having had occasion when Treating of the Qualifications of Ministers, to offer some thoughts upon this Head, I shall not here enlarge further.

All therefore that remaineth now to be discoursed concerning Preaching, I humbly conceive, may be summed up to these Two following Heads. As, 1. Some Directions for the right Management of the *Applicatory Part* of Sermons; that so the proper Improvement of the several *Inferences* usually insisted upon therein, may be clearly understood; and thereby Explicatory Truths come to be brought close home to the Conscience. 2. Some Rules in relation to *Lecturing*, in order to the Pointing out the most proper and profitable Way of expounding Scripture. Both which, shall be treated of in the next Chapter.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

The Applicatory Part *of Sermons, is a most material Branch of the Dispensation of the Gospel. Great Wisdom is necessary towards the right managing it. The Doctrinal Part is in a great Measure lost, where there is not a close and pertinent Application. The several* Inferences *most usual in Preaching, such as, for Information, Confutation, Examination, Reproof, Consolation and Exhortation, are all particularly considered. Their Nature, Scope, and suitable Improvement, are declared. In discoursing those Heads, the several* wrong Measures *in applying Doctrinal Truths, to the great Prejudice of the glorious Gospel, are clearly discovered. Such is the* Import *and* Consequence *of a faithful and prudent Application of Gospel Doctrines, as obligeth conscientious Ministers, to a serious Study and deep Concern in relation to the same. Such Ministers will also endeavour a serious and close Way of Lecturing; concerning the right Method of which, an* Appendix *is subjoined.*

THat the *Conscientious* and *Wise* Management of the *Applicatory Part* of Gospel Sermons, is a grand Qualification in a Minister, is a thing so evident as will admit of no Debate. Yea Wisdom

herein, is so necessary, that generally speaking, the Doctrinal Part of Gospel Truths should very much fall to the Ground, if there were not a right Improvement of them, by bringing them home close to Conscience in order to Practice: And seeing 'tis the *Doer* and not the Hearer of the Word of the Lord which shall be blessed, 'tis certainly most clear, that Ministers ought to make this Part of their Work a special Piece of their most serious Study.

The Practical Inferences, most used in Preaching are either by way of *Information*, or *Confutation*, or *Examination*, or *Reproof*, or *Consolation*, or *Exhortation*; together with some subordinate Branches implied under these. Accordingly we find the Holy Ghost declare, *That all Scripture is of use for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness*, 2 Tim. 3. 16.

The Reason of mentioning those *Inferences*, being only to advance some few Thoughts relative to a close, serious, and searching Manner of bringing home of Gospel-Truths to the Souls and Consciences of Men, but not at all with any Design of enlarging upon the several Reasonings and Remarks of the *Schools* in relation to such Heads; I shall therefore with the greatest Brevity only touch a little at each of them, according to their various Import and Designs.

In Treating of which, considering that the grand *Scope* of Doctrinal Truths consists much in a suitable *Application*, it would therefore seem very proper, that when Ministers have finished the Explicatory Part of their Sermons, that they should introduce themselves unto the more Practical, by some grave *serious Admonition* unto their People, shewing that now they are come unto the princi-

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pal and important part of their Diſcourſe, in which the Glory of God, the Advance of ſerious Religion, and the Good of their Souls, is deeply concerned: and that therefore, if it be neglected, or only overly entertained, all the other Parts of the Sermon ſhall certainly come to little account, ſave in bearing Witneſs againſt them. Thus, we find our Lord, in the Applications of the Epiſtles written unto the ſeven Churches, fall into a very ſerious and ſolemn way of addreſſing the Conſciences of the Perſons concerned, by crying unto them, *Let him that hath Ears hear what the Spirit ſaith unto the Churches.* But now to proceed to the more particular Conſideration of the ſeveral Inferences.

The Inference for *Information* being immediately deſigned for advancing the Light of the Mind, it would always be moſt ſolid, and native from the Doctrine; yea it ought to be ſo *clear* in its Connection, and ſo *diſtinct* in its Expreſſion, that the Judgment upon hearing it may be in caſe preſently to conceive and aſſent unto it. For, if it either contain any degree of a Stretch in it, or be enunciate in obſcure heterogeneous Terms from the Nature of the Doctrine, it can never have much of real Information in it, except only to proclaim the Weakneſs of the Preacher. And however an *ingenious Fancy* may go very far, in finding out *Informations* from Doctrines, which may in the long Line of Reaſoning be found to have ſome Foundation in the Text; yet, perhaps, when they are too remote, they might be better ſpared to ſome other Subject, of which they would be the more immediate and native Produce.

To which I ſhall only ſubjoin, that any *Enlargements* upon the Uſe of Information, would ei-

ther respect the clearing of the Connection when needful, or the Increase of Knowledge even in uncontroverted Truths, or the paving the Way for the Confutation of the opposite erroneous Principles, or for the Rebuke of the contrary sinful and immoral Practices.

And therefore, the Use of Confutation, as it always supposeth Information, it seems (where there is Occasion for it) to fall in very natively after the former; providing always that the Nature and Scope of the Doctrine look that way.

In speaking of which, I mean the Inference for *Confutation*, I shall a little consider the right Management of it; and that so much the rather, because when this Inference is solidly improven, it proves a noble Mean in defending the Faith, by vindicating Divine Truths from all the grosser erroneous Mixtures and Corruptions, with which the Enmity and Subtilty of *Satan* and wicked Men hath spoiled many of them, *Jude* 3. *Titus* 1. 9.

Towards *confuting* erroneous Doctrines in a solid and convincing way, several things would be carefully attended unto: such as a prudent abstaining from all unnecessary Enlargements upon old and obliterate Errors, which for the present are not only no ways endangering the Church, but perhaps are also very little known unto the Congregation; more especially considering that the *raking up* of such hath often afforded but too much ground to Doubting amongst the Weak, and to Disputing amongst the Curious. So likewise, all vain boasting Reflections or Noise of Words, previous to close Reasoning, would be carefully shunned; for, as it's but a foolish triumphing before the Victory, so it can never be agreeable to judicious Hearers.

And

And therefore, as a distinct *Explication* and *Confirmation* of the Doctrine, from which the Confutation is drawn, ought to precede the Reasoning Part; so a *clear stating* of the Controversy contained in the opposite Error, together with a *prudent Choice* of some few of the most convincing Arguments founded upon the Doctrine, against the same, would be proceeded unto. In managing which, the greatest care would be taken of any Looseness or Insolidity in Reasoning; for, one unhinged or weak Argument may do more harm, than what (through the corrupt Bias of the Mind) many good ones can do Service; as also the most significant Exceptions of the Adversaries would be taken off. And finally, after the Reasoning part is over, it may not be altogether improper, especially where the Controversy is of moment, in a serious and grave manner to appeal to the Thoughts and Minds of the Hearers, how far Scripture and Reason confoundeth such and such Errors; and thereupon seriously cautioning all Ranks against them; and warning them of the Books, and several other Means, by which they are most in hazard to be infected with them. As for the Expediency of this Method, as the solid Rules of Reasoning plead for it, so likewise it were no great difficulty to shew the *whole Progress* thereof, from the Great Apostle's way of confuting the Errors which threaten'd to infect the Churches of Christ at *Rome* and *Galatia*.

The next Inference is, that of *Examination* or Tryal, which I conceive is a Branch of Application as difficult to conscientious Ministers, as any they have to manage. Neither indeed can it be otherwise; for considering how much the Glory of God, the Peace, Comfort, and Salvation of immor-

immortal Souls dependeth upon Peoples knowing solidly, by Scripture Marks, what their State, Condition, Frame, Walk, and Spiritual Attainments are, 'tis no wonder if serious Ministers, in treating of this Inference, be afraid of turning in the least either to the Right or Left Hand.

As to what concerneth this Inference for *Tryal*, considering how complex it is, sometimes respecting the Scriptural weighing of a Person's *State*, in relation to their Justification, at other times referring to the tryal of the *Truth* and *Sincerity* of their Sanctification; again in a third case regarding only the Examination of the *Degrees* of Grace, and Advances in Practical Godliness, as at other times the finding out the genuine Kind and Quality of spiritual Operations and Attainments: I say, considering this Inference looks so many various Ways, it's clear, that in proportion thereto, there would be a most prudent and solid Choice of the *Scripture Marks* and *Evidences* which are advanced. And therefore, with respect to the whole, these following Rules seem proper to be observed.

As, 1. The *Case* to be tryed, whatever it respect, whether the Truth or Growth of Grace, or any thing else, would be most *distinctly stated*.

2. The *Scriptural Mark* adduced for the determination of the Case, would be most *clear*, *particular*, and *concludent*. I say concludent, by which I understand, that the Mark given for tryal should be so far essential unto and inseparable from the thing for which 'tis proposed as an Evidence, that according to the nature of things it's simply impossible but the one should infer the other: For, if Marks for tryal be either delivered in obscure, ambiguous, too general, or loose Terms, as they cannot give light to the Mind, so neither Satisfaction

faction to the Conſcience. And therefore 'tis moſt certain, that a Miniſter's great Work in managing an Inference for tryal, conſiſts in propounding ſuch Evidences and Characters from the Word of the Lord relative to the Queſtion in hand, as at firſt view bears much of a cloſe *convincing Connection* betwixt themſelves and the things for which they are adduced as Marks.

To clear all which the more, let us conſider, as was formerly hinted, that if a Sermon inſiſting upon an Uſe of *Tryal* ſhall only in an overly general manner tell Men, that 'tis Believers in Chriſt, Lovers of God, Haters of Sin, that are true Chriſtians; or perhaps ſhall come a little nearer, by declaring, that 'tis only the regenerate Soul, the Perſon cloſing with a whole Chriſt, the ſincere Reſpecter of all God's Commands, whom God will approve: yet ſtill, after all this, I ſay here is but too general Work, eſpecially in a matter of ſuch conſequence to Souls. For, however theſe general Terms may ſerve for the firſt Form of propounding the Mark, yet if they be not divided and explained, and made ſo *particular*, *poſitive*, and *clear*, as the ſerious, jealous, doubting Soul may get ſome Light from them, they are like to be but of very little uſe. Yea more, if not ſo managed, the *ſecure*, *conceited*, *preſumptuous* Soul may come to be more confirmed in their falſe Hopes, by reaſon of ſome external Reſemblance of thoſe things with them, than what they were before.

And therefore, 3. When inſiſting upon an Inference for *Tryal*, as on the one hand, great care would be taken of not *wounding* ſerious Souls, whoſe Conſciences are by far more tender than others; that ſo Miniſters, like their compaſſionate Maſter, may neither *break the bruiſed Reed, nor quench the*

the smoaking Flax; so on the other hand, an equal Care would be taken to wound and alarm in Mercy not only the stupid and stout-hearted Sinner, but also the proud self-commending Pharisaical Formalist. Accordingly, if we look to our Lord's, or the Apostle's way of applying Gospel-Doctrines, we shall find very much of this in it, *Matth.* 3. 9, 10. *Matth.* 5. 1, to 10. *Matth.* 23. 1 *Tim.* 3. 5.

In short, where Ministers have had real Experience of the Power of the Plagues of their own Hearts, and particularly of the Deceitfulness thereof, and where they are acquainted with the *various Exercises* of Grace from its first Beginnings to its greater Advances, and where they have also known the several *perplexing Jealousies*, Doubts and Fears, which but too often affect the Spirits of serious Persons: I say, such Ministers, from the complex Knowledge of those things, upon some serious Reflection, will be able through Grace so to conceive, explain and apply scriptural Marks, as the Consciences of their Hearers shall be made in less or in more to know, that God is with them; and that He whose Glory 'tis to search the Hearts and to try the Reins, to awaken the Conscience, and again to turn the Storm into a Calm, is allowing them some measure of the Tongue of the Learned to speak a Word in season.

As indeed on the other hand, it must be owned, that where there is *no Experience* this way, it must certainly be both a most difficult and dangerous Task for a Man to weigh others in the Ballance of the Sanctuary, who never was by the Spirit and Word put in those Spiritual Scales, and tryed himself. For, tho' *Head-Knowledge* may furnish a Man with Scripture Evidences and Signs for all Cases, yet wanting the *spiritual discerning Eye* of saving

saving Light, and being ignorant of the pleasant secret Motions and Exercises of Grace, as he can never speak from the Heart to the Heart, so he is undeniably in great hazard of either wounding them whom the Lord would have healed, or of healing them for whom spiritual Brokenness is a thousand times more proper, *Jer.* 23. 14. *Isa.* 30. 10.

Having now heard a little about the Inference for *Tryal*, the next which I conceive most natively falls in, is that complex one ordinarily termed an Inference for *Terror* on the one hand, or for *Consolation* on the other. For, when Ministers have been weighing their People in the Ballance of the Sanctuary, and they thereupon found either *light* or *good Weight*; so in proportion, either the terrible Threatnings of the Law, or the comforting Promises of the Gospel are suitably to be applied to them.

And in preaching the *Law*, I humbly conceive there would rather be a grave close insisting upon the Justice, Equity, Weight and Certainty of the Divine Threatnings, than any great Noise of dreadful passionate-like Words, making but an uncertain Sound. For, it being *serious Reasoning*, founded upon the Reality of a Person's or People's Guilt, and upon the Inevitableness of the Divine Wrath in case of Impenitency, which promiseth most towards Conviction, 'tis thereupon clear that the Minister, who in a solid *nervous way* endeavours to prove unto Persons, that the undeniable Characters of an unregenerate State, and of an evil Conversation, are to be found with them; and who next cleareth up from the essential Holiness, Justice, and Truth of the Deity, and from the irrevocable Decrees and stated Methods of

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Procedure with unregenerate, unbelieving, impetinent Sinners, that the Wrath of God shall certainly be revealed one Day against the Workers of Iniquity: I say, here is the Man, who through the Divine Blessing is most like to make the Law a *School-master* for sending Sinners to Christ; more especially, if upon all these, he next appeal to the Reason and Consciences of the Wicked, which way a *Deity* essentially and necessarily holy, can ever change his Nature, or recall his peremptory righteous Threatnings for them, unless they fall in with the Gospel-way of Salvation.

So on the other hand, in *comforting* the Godly, 'tis certain that a prudent chusing of those Promises which are annexed unto the gracious Qualifications tryed and found to be in them, together with the opening up the Import thereof, and then declaring the great Faithfulness of the Promiser; I say 'tis clear that these things will far more reach and advance the End of *Consolation*, than any general Assertions of their Interest in the Covenant Right to the Promises, and Title to Christ's Purchase can ever do. And hence the Holy Ghost towards the great and constant Consolation of serious Christians, hath in the Scriptures most wisely annexed such and such *particular Promises* to the Exercise of the various Graces of the Spirit; that so while the godly Person can but lay claim to the Exercise of any one true Grace, he may have considerable Comfort from some one or other of the precious Promises, *Isa.* 45. 22. *Matth.* 5. 4. *Psal.* 91. 14. to the End, *Rom.* 8. 28. *Psal.* 112. and such like.

The next Inference in applying of Gospel-Truths, is that for *Reproof*, which must indeed be owned to require very much of Wisdom and Thought,

Thought, towards the right and effectual Improvement of it: for as the Persons (generally speaking) who deserve it most, are oft times of all others least capable to receive it; so a very *small Mismanagement* is in great hazard to keep the Minister from being the *wise Reprover* meeting with an *obedient Ear*, Prov. 25. 12.

And therefore, as on the one hand there ought undoubtedly to be very plain, impartial, and faithful Preaching against all Sin, and more especially against the abounding predominant Sins of the Congregation; so on the other, 'tis equally certain, that there are several prudent obliging ways of reproving, which in respect of some others, promise to gain most upon the Party concerned.

And these are, 1. To consider the *Nature* and *Circumstances* of the Sin to be reproved; for, if the Case be that there are some very gross Sins, whether great Impieties or gross Immoralities notourly prevailing amongst a People, then it is clear that the Minister stands obliged even publickly to declare, that such Abominations do abound, and thereupon particularly to hold out their Contrariety to the holy Nature and Law of God, as also to the original Rectitude of the Human Nature it self; and so taking occasion to shew the provoking Nature and heinous Aggravations thereof, he ought with great Authority to reprove the guilty part of the Congregation, telling them in the Fear of the Lord, that they are Transgressors of the Law of the Great God, and that they are such, contrary to their highest Duty and greatest Interest; and that as their Transgressions are perfectly observed and recorded by the Omniscient God, so He will infallibly judge them one Day. Thus God taught his Prophets of old, and his Ministers since,

since, to be faithful Reprovers of Sin, *Isa.* 58. 1. *Hos.* 4. 1, 2, 3. *Titus* 2. 15.

But, 2 If the *Case* be, that only some *Two* or *Three* of a Congregation are beginning by some more private sinful Practices, to threaten the ensnaring of others into Mocking, Swearing, Drunkenness and the like, it would seem then proper, towards a timeous removing this Root of Bitterness, that in a discreet private Way the Persons principally Guilty should be seriously dealt with, by holding forth what great Sin and Wrath they may bring not only upon their own Souls, but also upon many others in the Place; and how much they may obstruct the Success of the Gospel and Advance of Godliness: And hereupon ought to be plainly told, that if they continue obstinate after this obliging Admonition, that not only must the Word of the Lord come out against them in Publick, in a Doctrinal Way, but also the Judicatures of the Church must proceed to Censure: Which Method, as 'tis explicitely Scriptural, being our Lord's Advice in such Cases, so were it oftner and more seriously tried, who knows how much of a Divine Blessing might attend it? *Matth.* 18. 15, 16.

3. If the *Case* run yet in another Channel; such as, that several particular Persons who are in no concert together, are known by the Minister to be really living in some Secret Course of Wickedness, but withal as the Knowledge of this is no ways Publick, so neither doth the Persons guilty know any thing of the Minister's Information: I say in that Case, the Minister seems to have very fair Access (with *Nathan* in his Parable) to fall very close and hard upon those Sins in Publick Sermon; and by lamenting over the ground-

groundleſs Boldneſs which Men get in ſinning, while undiſcovered to the World he may oblige the Conſciences of the Guilty tho' never named, to cry out, I am the Man.

In ſhort, as all *Reproof* for Sin, would be ſolidly founded on the Word of the Lord, and upon the Doctrine from which it's drawn as an Inference, ſo nothing poſſibly can weaken a Rebuke more, than any appearance of *Prejudice*, *Humour*, or *Paſſion* in the Reprover. And as to what concerneth the reproving of Sins, which Miniſters may be witneſſes to, in private providential Converſation with wicked Men; as 'tis clear that neither Perſons intoxicate with *Drink* or *Paſſion*, are for the Time, any Ways capable of hearkning unto it, ſo in other Caſes, ſuch as prophane Swearing and Mocking at Godlineſs, perhaps if it be in Preſence of more Company, a ſerious Entreaty to ſhew a juſt Regard to the Deity's great Name, and to chooſe ſome other Subject for Droll than Religion, may, if delivered with an obliging Countenance go further than greater Enlargements for the Time would do. In fine, ſome pleaſant ſolid turns of Wit, diverting ſinful Subjects and introducing others, hath very often done no ſmall ſervice to Religion upon ſuch occaſions; For, as we are not to ſuffer Sin upon our Brother, ſo neither are we to throw our Pearls before Swine.

The laſt Inference is, that for *Exhortation*, which often conſiſts of Goſpel Calls, either to Repentance towards God, or to Faith in Jeſus Chriſt, or to Practical Holineſs in the Truth or various Degrees and Advances thereof. This uſe of *Exhortation*, as it ought always to have a very clear Scriptural Foundation in the Text and Do-

ſtrine, as being drawn from thence, either from the Conſideration of Duty or Intereſt (which ſtrictly ſpeaking cannot be ſeparate) ſo alſo the *Duty* exhorted unto, being once clearly propounded, ſome of the moſt *pertinent Directions*, together with ſome of the ſtrongeſt *Perſwaſives* leading and moving thereunto, ought in the moſt diſtinct and argumentative Manner to be ſubjoined. For, however ſhort way *Moral Swaſion* can go with Deaf and Dead Man, yet ſome conſiderable Meaſures of Head Knowledge, together with a natural Conſcience and reaſoning Faculty remaining yet with Men, to all which it pleaſeth God oftentimes to ſuperadd the common Operations of the Spirit; I ſay conſidering all theſe, 'tis clear that Miniſters in managing Inferences of *Exhortation* in relation to the great important Goſpel-Duties of Faith, Repentance and New Obedience, ought in the moſt cloſe reaſoning and convincing Way and Manner to *lay Siege* unto the Conſcience, in order to the compelling Sinners to come in, *Luke* 14. 23.

But now in regard the *Exhortation* relative to Sinners *coming to Chriſt by Faith*, contains the great Goſpel-Command, 1 *John* 3. 23. And is that, upon the Obedience of which, Salvation dependeth; I ſhall therefore take the Freedom to offer a few Thoughts in relation to the right managing of this important Inference.

And *Firſt*, Such an *Exhortation* ought certainly to have very clear and ſolid Scriptural Foundation, ſuch as Goſpel Commands, Goſpel Offers and Invitations, or ſome of the moſt remarkable Expoſtulations of the Holy Ghoſt looking that way. For, in a Matter of ſuch great Conſequence, as Conſcience would be perfectly informed; ſo it would

would be very closely urged by Divine Warrant and Authority.

2. In making a *Gospel Offer* of the glorious Redeemer, it's evident, there would appear something of a peculiar *Solemnity* in Point of deep Seriousness and Concern in dispensing the same. And for this end, it would seem not improper, that the Minister should introduce the offer of the great Salvation; by shewing, that he is now come to the *important Point* of his Sermon, even the grand Design of the Gospel; and that he is now come to exhort unto a Duty in which the Glory of Jehovah, the Honour of the Mediator, and the Salvation of Men are deeply concerned; and thereupon would take occasion in the most pathetical Manner to entreat their most serious Attention: I say all proper Means would be used towards engaging both the Ear and the Mind, by shewing, that the present Point is a Matter of the last Consequence, and that, upon which their Eternity dependeth; and withal, assuring them that the Omniscient Eye of Him whose Gospel is Preaching; is infallibly, in a most peculiar Manner looking down to observe and record, who will obey the great Call, and who will not. Briefly, no Man can express too much Seriousness on such a Subject, for, the Import of it, is inconceivably Great. And hence even *Moses*, whose great Wisdom and Meekness rendered him no Admirer of *many Words*, yet when he comes to exhort the People seriously to choose God for their God, and to keep Covenant with him, behold what *extraordinary Solemnity* of Speech is used by him: Calling Heaven and Earth to witness, that he had set that Day Life and Death before them, *Deut.* 30. 15, to 19. Yea our Lord

himself, who infallibly knew the proper Season for Ministers using *Solemnity* in Frame or Expression; behold, how, as he chooseth the *Great* and *Last* Day of the Feast to proclaim the offer of the great Salvation upon, so in doing it, 'tis recorded that he *stood* and *cryed*, If any Man thirst, let him come unto me and drink, *John* 7. 37.

But now to proceed, this serious *Introduction* being over, there would be next a prudent obviating in few Words, the grand Objection of Sinners natural want of Power for believing, by shewing that if they be sensible of their inability, and looking to God to draw them, that in that Case they have to do with a Sovereign God, who oftentimes delights to glorifie the Riches and Power of his Grace, in making the Calls and Offers of the Gospel to become savingly powerful, and that therefore while hearing the Gospel Command, they would aim at putting forth the withered Hand.

All which being over, some massy pertinent Scripture would be chosen for delivering the great Exhortation and Call of the Gospel in: Such as *Isa.* 45. 22. & 55. 1. *Rev.* 22. 17. or such like. And then, as Motives, the Glory of Christ's Person, His Fulness as God, and as Mediator, the Suitableness of His Offices, the Reasonableness and great Condescension of the Terms of the Gospel, would be particularly insisted upon.

And as *Directions*, the Nature of Faith in its assenting and consenting Acts being opened up, 'tis clear, that as Persons dead in Sin would be taught who can only be its *Author*; so they would likewise be directed unto serious Reading, Hearing, Meditation, and Prayer, as the Means in which it is wrought: And upon the whole would

be

be exhorted by ſerious Conſideration on their loſt Eſtate, and on the Fulneſs and Freeneſs of the offer, to be eſſaying to come to the Lord Jeſus; and that by mourning for the ſinfulneſs of Nature and Life, and by endeavouring cordially to chooſe Him, as the Lord their Portion, Righteouſneſs and Lawgiver. But having had occaſion to ſpeak ſomewhat fully to this Head on the *Homiletical Sermon*, from *Song* 5. 10. I ſhall not now further enlarge.

And therefore in ſhort, as a Miniſter in managing an Exhortation of this kind, would both in his Words and Frame evidence, that 'tis much upon his Heart to preach *Chriſt* and not *himſelf*, and that he is exceedingly concerned for the Glory of his Lord, and for the Salvation of his People; ſo likewiſe, as an Evidence thereof, he would be ſo *Pathetical* in his Invitations, ſo *cloſe* in his Reaſonings and Expoſtulations, ſo *Particular* in his anſwering Objections, and ſo plain in his Directions, as the Conſciences of his People may bear him witneſs, that the poor Miniſter is in earneſt, ſtirring up the Gift of God in him, towards his making the Name of Chriſt great in the Place, and to be remembred to all Generations, *Pſalm* 45. *ult.*

I know there are other *Inferences*, ſuch as for *Caution*, *Lamentation*, *Dehortation*, and the like; but as theſe are ſubordinate Branches of the former more general Heads, and their Import and Scope ſufficiently clear, I ſhall not offer any Enlargements upon them.

And therefore, as the Concluſion of all, I ſay the Miniſter who makes Conſcience of being well acquainted with the ſpiritual State and Condition of his People, and who thereupon goes to

his Closet with a deep Concern of Spirit, and by serious Prayer, Reading and Meditation, endeavours to find out acceptable Words, even substantial pertinent Gospel Truths, promising most towards the Glory of Christ, the Conversion and Edification of his Hearers; and who in Pulpit by a grave Ministerial Deportment, and by a distinct serious delivery of his Sermon, endeavours to speak closely home to Conscience for God and Religion; and who after all, is frequently watering the Seed of the Word by fervent Prayer, for a rich Blessing upon the same; and who in the last Place, by a course of Holy Obedience, is practically proclaiming a lively Faith and Love towards the same Lord Jesus Christ whom he preacheth to others; here I say, is the *faithful Steward* and Servant, who is giving to every one of the Houshold their Meat in due Season, and who is Praying and Watching against his Lord come, and who certainly when the chief Shepherd appears, shall in an eminent Way and Manner appear with him in Glory, 1 *Pet.* 5. 4.

And thus having discoursed, what respecteth the *Application* of Gospel Truths unto the Consciences of the Hearers, I come in the Last Place, to offer some few Thoughts relative to *Lecturing*.

APPEN-

APPENDIX

CONCERNING

The Right Method

OF

LECTURING.

MUCH of Instruction and Edification depending on the right Management of the Exercise of *Lecturing*, the following *Rules* are humbly offered to Consideration.

Rule 1. In *Lecturing* great Care should be taken of shunning the *two Extreams*, which some are too ready to fall into. The first of which is, that of being *too general* and overly, so that their Explication upon the Matter differeth little from Reading: The other is, that of being *too particular* and full, by which their Lecturing is almost quite turned into Preaching. For, as the former of these Extreams implieth Negligence, and is most blameworthy, so the latter in part inverteth the principal Design of that Exercise, which is to open up

the Scriptures towards a profitable Reading, suitable Meditation and Reflections thereupon, *Neh.* 8.8. *Luke* 24. 27. *And beginning at* Moses *and all the Prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself.*

Rule 2. Though the whole Book of God be of excellent use unto the Church in all Ages, yet it would seem reasonable that Ministers Knowledge of the *State* and *Condition* of their Flock, from time to time, together with their Observation of particular Times and Occasions, should considerably *regulate* the Choice of *Subjects* for Lecture. For 'tis undeniable, that the Providence of God oftentimes so circumstantiates Churches and particular Congregations, that such and such *Books, Prophecies, Epistles,* or *Contexts,* are as it were called upon by Name, as proper at such times to be insisted upon. Accordingly who will but notice the Contexts in the Old Testament insisted upon by our Lord in the New, they shall find a wonderful *Proportion* and Suitableness unto the Auditories he was concerned in, *Luke* 4. 17, to 23.

Rule 3. A Minister who would *lecture* to purpose and to Edification, should himself be very much Master of the Interpretation and *true Import* of the Scripture insisted on. In order to which, the Knowledge of the original Text, a serious pondering of the best Commentaries, together with a particular Consideration of the Context and principal Scope, cannot but jointly prove exceeding useful; more especially if there be a serious looking unto the Holy Ghost, for his opening up of those Scriptures which he originally inspired into the Minds of holy Men, *Dan.* 9. 2. 1 *Tim.* 4. 13, 15. *John* 16. 13.

Rule

Rule 4. A distinct Knowledge being attained of the Portion of Holy Scripture to be insisted on, the Minister would next set himself to methodize his Thoughts and Discourse so, as may tend most to Instruction and Edification. And in order to this Four things seem necessary: As, 1. A brief but clear Narration of the *principal Scope* of the Holy Ghost in the Context insisted on; which Scope sometimes may be but one, at other times, where the Context is large, and hath a Multiplicity of Matter in it, there may accordingly be various Ends and Designs to be narrated; and therefore great Care would be taken against forcing or straining any Chapter or large Portion of God's Word unto *one* and the same Scope, where the Holy Ghost hath really different ones. For hereby the Minister comes under a Temptation of forcing a Connection amongst all the Verses and Purposes therein, which Connection not being native, the Interpretation is but too like to become dark and confused. 2. The Scope being declared, a short distinct *Division* in proportion thereto, of the principal Heads of the Context, would be next offered; in doing of which great care would be taken in Study to attain unto a distinct Notion of the several *material Purposes*, upon which as so many Hinges, the other subordinate Parts of the Context do turn. For all must own that a distinct Division goes far towards a clear Interpretation; as also it's not only of great use to the Memory both of Minister and People, but proves exceeding helpful towards a distinct Turn in Speech from one Purpose to another. 3. After Division, where several Verses are considerably plain, it would seem that the *summing* up and declaring the Matter of those Verses in very

very few Words, is all that is needful; that so the Discourse may be principally spent upon the more difficult Parts, or seeming Contradictions which may be in the Words. And here indeed is no small Piece of right Lecturing; I mean for a Minister not only chiefly to insist upon, but likewise so to conceive the Interpretation of the more obscure and difficult Parts of the Context, as to be able in few Words to make them considerably plain unto the Hearers. 4. Having explain'd the whole, it cannot but be of use to suggest by some two or three *pertinent Notes*, the principal Truths, whether Doctrinal or more practical, which seem to be chiefly designed by the Holy Ghost in the Verses explained. For tho' *Explication* must still be owned to be the great immediate Design of Lecturing, and accordingly the Discourse ought to be spent that way; yet considering that most of Contexts have something *practical* in them, and that a few well conceived *Notes* will not only tend to impress the Interpretation upon the Mind, but may come also to affect the Heart, and influence the Practice; 'tis humbly conceived, that the subjoining of them may not be altogether incongruous. To which purpose it is remarkable, that our Lord annexeth unto the several Epistles, as an impressing Conclusion, *Let him that hath Ears, hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.*

Rule 5. That which greatly *enliveneth* and *adorneth* Lecturing, is, a Minister's discoursing the Explication so, as not only to open up simply the Import and Meaning of every Verse, but in doing of it, to shew the *rational Connection* of the several Parts with the principal Scope. As when a Minister is Lecturing upon a *controversial* Context, then

then to point out first the Truth contended for, in opposition unto such Errors, and next to adduce the several Arguments contained in the Verses for proving the same; and thereupon to shew the Strength and Force of those Arguments. And so likewise if a Context be *hortatory*, exhorting unto some Duty, one or more, by several Motives; in that case, 'tis not so much the direct Interpretation of the Words, as the opening up the rational Connection, which will give most Satisfaction to the Hearers, *Acts* 17. 2. ch. 18. 4.

Rule 6. Considering that the Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, and the Increase thereof, is the great immediate End of Lecturing, it would therefore seem proper, that a considerable Portion of the Lord's Word should be in every Lecture insisted upon as the Subject thereof. For, tho' it be true, that some Contexts are far more obscure and intricate than others, which consequently must require more Time to open them up; yet where there is first *Diligence* in Study, and next a Minister's Thoughts *distinctly* methodized, so as he shall need to lose neither Time nor Words in the Pulpit; in that case, a considerable Progress may still be made, even suppose the Context be somewhat large. And indeed, as hath been said, much dependeth, both in Preaching and Lecturing, upon *Diligence in Study*: For by it a Minister may not only, by the Divine Assistance, make his Pulpit-Work exceeding pleasant and easy, but also may be in case so to Lecture, as to adorn the Gospel, and greatly refresh and edify his People. So that his Lectures shall be much desired and longed for, both by the Serious and Judicious among them.

All

All which *Rules* I have insisted on a little the more, that so the *Reputation* of that excellent and useful Ordinance of Lecturing may be more and more advanced. It being most certain, that as Overlines and too much of a *cursory Performance* therein hath oftentimes made it to be little esteemed among many; so on the other hand, when 'tis performed with a considerable Comprehension of Matter, Distinctness of Method, and Clearness of Explication, and withall the Minister in the Issue summing all up into some two or three substantial Notes, it wonderfully satisfieth and gaineth ground among most of Hearers. Neither indeed can it be otherwise where the Human Mind is any ways seriously inclined towards Increase of Knowledge: And therefore 'tis certainly very much both Duty and Interest, not only for Ministers to allow Diligence and close Application of Mind in studying Sermons, but also to be very concerned in the *Matter* and *Method* of their Lectures; endeavouring to imbelish them by a rich Variety of the former, and to illustrate them by the Distinctness and Accuracy of the latter.

But now upon the whole, after all the *Directions* which either have been spoken of, or possibly can be advanced upon the Head of Preaching or Lecturing, there is *one thing* must still be granted; and that is, That every Minister can only Lecture and Preach according to the *measure* of Grace and Gifts bestowed upon him. Yea more, so much dependeth, both in studying and preaching, upon the actual Influences of Light and Life from the Holy Spirit; and an All-wise God doth so often exercise a *Sovereignty* in directing and over-ruling Ministers Thoughts and private Preparations, that they

they are frequently led both unto Matter and Method, which upon their firſt Views of the Subject very little appeared unto them.

All which as it no ways on the one hand argueth againſt the *greateſt Diligence* on Miniſters part, towards the finding out of acceptable Words, and ſetting them in the moſt promiſing Order; ſo on the other hand it pleadeth ſtrongly for Miniſters being moſt particular and ſerious in their *Applications* to the Throne of Grace, that that God, who knows what every Lecture and Sermon hath to accompliſh, would be pleaſed to give ſpecial Light, Direction and Influence, as to Matter, Method, Dialect and Frame, and all things relative thereto. *In fine*, the Glorious Head of Influences beſtoweth his Grace and Gifts upon his Miniſters, to ſanctify, ſtrengthen and elevate their rational Faculties and Powers in his Service, that ſo they may act and acquit themſelves *like Men* in the Work of their God: yea in ſo doing, their Diligence hath the ſure Promiſe of an Increaſe of Grace. And yet ſtill, ſuch is God's *Sovereignty*, on the other hand, over all the Means of Grace, and over all Miniſterial Performances, and ſuch is his Knowledge of *ſecret things*, with reſpect to the particular Ends and Deſigns of the Goſpel (which no ways appertain unto us) that it remains highly ſuitable for all Miniſters, even after their utmoſt Diligence in Study, to do theſe two.

Firſt, So far to ſubmit *all their Preparations* to an All-wiſe God, as not to be ſurprized, upon his going contrary to their Expectation in ſeveral things: Such as, his ſhining moſt upon ſome Truths *in Preaching*, upon which perhaps he ſhined leaſt in *private Study*; his bringing ſome Truths

and

and Enlargements to remembrance, which were little meditate upon before; his suffering other Truths to be forgotten, which possibly were particularly intended to be insisted on. For these and many such wonderful things are with him, who knows the *set Time*, the *Text*, the *Sermon*, and Truths appointed, for the Conversion, Restoration, and Edification of his Elect.

Secondly, Considering how absolutely a Minister's *Judgment*, *Memory*, *Affections* and *Utterance* dependeth upon a Divine Concurrence and Influence, 'tis most clear, that even after their most promising Preparations in private, they ought *as humbly and closely to depend upon the Spirit of the Lord Jesus* for actual Assistance, as if they had made none at all. For tho' the Minister deserveth to be deserted of God, who is either sinfully *slothful* and negligent in Preparation, or who, like the *Quakers*, *enthusiastically* expects extemporary Matter and Inspiration; yet on the other hand, 'tis equally certain, that he who dependeth on his own Preparations, as if they were sufficient, greatly provoketh the Lord to cause such an one know, that he who trusteth to his own Understanding is a Fool.

And therefore I am bold to say, that were the Experience of the greatest and most able Ministers of Christ in all Ages questioned concerning the *grand Direction* for right preaching the Gospel, they would certainly first recommend *great Diligence* in private Study, even as if all were to be done there; and next an *entire* and *close Dependance* upon the Spirit of God through Jesus Christ, as if they had made little or no Preparation at all, 2 *Cor.* 3. 5.

This

This *Dependance on Christ*, with respect to Preaching, I take to consist, 1. In a Minister's believing truely, that 'tis neither his best Preparations, nor personal Gifts, yea nor habitual Grace, that are sufficient (without present actual Influences of Light and Life) towards his Preaching, with that Knowledge, Faith, Love and Zeal, which ought to accompany the Dispensation of the Gospel. And, 2. In his believing a *Fulness* in Christ, and thereupon having the Desire of his Soul following hard out after the Breathings of the North and South Wind; crying (as it were in his Heart) through the whole of the Sermon, *O Lord, without thee I can do nothing.*

And when this *Dependance* ariseth from a serious deep Concern for the Glory of *Jehovah* and the Mediator, and for the Salvation of Souls; so that the *Minister* is not so much crying with *Saul, to be honoured before the People*, as really to be helped to Sincerity and Liveliness, towards the commending Christ and Religion to their Souls and Consciences: In this case, I say, 'tis certainly one of the most promising Tokens, for Assistance, Acceptance, and Success, which can possibly be found amongst Men. *O Dependance!* an humble and serious Dependance, who can sufficiently commend it.

And now to shut up all, it only remains to leave on Record the *Great Duty* of Ministers watering by Prayer the Seed sown; by which I do not so much understand their publick Applications to the Throne of Grace, as a frequent fervent wrestling in secret (setting some Times apart for that End) and therein, like a faithful Shepherd, declaring the *various Cases* of the Flock, and lamenting over the absolute Deadness and Formality of some, the spiri-

spiritual Decays and Backslidings of others, acknowledging also his own manifold Short-comings, and thereupon *pleading importunately* by all suitable Arguments, that a gracious God would gloriously appear, in a convincing, converting, and edifying Work of Grace amongst all Ranks in the Congregation, *Isa.* 53. 1. *Jer.* 9. 1. *Psal.* 85. 6. *Luke* 6. 12. *Col.* 4. 12. In fine, here is the *Minister* that watcheth for Souls, as one who must give an account; and who through Grace, at his Lord's coming, shall be able to make it with Joy, and not with Grief, *Heb.* 13. 17.

DIS-

DISCOURSES
CONCERNING
The Right Method
OF
PREACHING.

PART III.

CHAP. I.

The Gospel contains a sufficient Treasure *for rendring every Minister a* ready Scribe, *in the Things of the Kingdom of God. The Grand Ends and Designs of the Glorious Gospel are three; to wit,* 1. *The Conversion, and,* 2. *The Edification of the Elect, and,* 3. *The rendring unbelieving impenitent Sinners greatly inexcusable. In*

Preaching to the Unconverted, both the Malady *and the* Remedy *would be most particularly declared. In opening up the former, the full* Import *of Man's lapsed Condition would be set in the greatest Light. As,* 1. *The great Sinfulness of his Nature and Life.* 2. *The Depth of Misery, into which he is fallen: And,* 3. *The absolute Impotency he is under as to recovering himself. The proper and several Topicks conceived to be most adjusted to the Preaching and holding forth the foresaid Truths, are particularly condescended on.*

HAving discoursed in the preceeding Part, the several *Rules* relative to the right Method and Manner of preaching the glorious Gospel; it now remaineth, that *Materia Evangelica,* or the Matter of the Gospel, as containing the several Doctrines and Truths perfectly adjusted to all the *various States* and Conditions of the Converted and Unconverted, together with their several subordinate Cases, which the Children of Men possibly can be in, should be next considered; that so we may not only see a compleat *Treasure* in the Book of God, out of which Ministers, as ready and *well-instructed Scribes,* may bring forth things new and old, but also according to the Apostle's grand Direction may shew themselves *Workmen who need not be ashamed, as rightly dividing the Word of Truth,* 2 Tim. 2. 15.

That much of Ministerial *Wisdom* consisteth in a pertinent Choice of Subjects, is undeniable: For considering the many different Auditories and Occa-

Occasions, which Ministers meet with from time to time; 'tis evident they must be called to come forth with very different Messages to their People.

And therefore I shall here take occasion of discoursing these *Two* Heads; to wit, 1. The grand *Designs* of a Gospel-Ministry. And, 2. From these, consider, what are the Gospel *Truths* and *Doctrines* which lie neareſt, and (in the Sphere of Means) promise most towards the accomplishment of those Ends.

As for the *first*, 'tis plain, that 1*st* the *Conversion* of the Elect; and, 2*dly*, their *Edification*, till the begun good Work be perfected, to the Praise of the great Love and Mercy of God in Christ Jesus; and then, 3*dly*, the rendering the remaining unbelieving impenitent part of Gospel Hearers, to the Praise of Glorious Justice, greatly inexcusable beyond all others in the World, are the great, principal, direct and eventual Designs and Ends of a Gospel-Dispensation among Men, *Ephes.* 4. 11. *Matth.* 10. 14, 15. 2 *Cor.* 2. 16. *John* 3. 19.

According to all which 'tis evident, that Ministers have to do with three sorts of Persons in preaching the Gospel: 1. With the *unconverted Elect*, altogether dead in Trespasses and Sins. 2. With the *Converted*, who though truly spiritually alive, yet withall are exceeding imperfect, and liable unto a great many Alterations, Backslidings, and spiritual Decays. And, 3. With *rebellious* Sinners, who obstinately refuse to be reclaimed by any means whatsoever. In proportion to all which,

Let us, 2*dly*, consider the several Gospel *Doctrines*, adjusted to the foresaid various sorts of Persons. For however, a Soveraign God is limited to

Motives and Ends, and its obliging unto Holiness in Thoughts, Desires, Looks, Words and Actions, *Rom.* 8. 7. *Matth.* 25. 24. There are also many other solid and clear Proofs of this *Enmity*, such as, the Heart's *raging* against a close-searching and reproving Gospel, which finds out the Sinner in his Wickedness, and makes him uneasy under the same; as also the frequent *Mockings* at serious practical Godliness, and at the Godly themselves, upon the account thereof; together with the inexpressible Backwardness and Contrariety of Heart unto any thing like Seriousness and Spirituality in Religion: All which jointly proclaim a strong deep Root of *Enmity* against God and Godliness to be naturally in Man, 1 *Kings* 22. 8. 2 *Kings* 2. 23. *Isa.* 30. 10, 11. Upon all which, towards the further Discovery of the great *Corruption* of the Human Nature,

There would also be a clear pointing out of the great Soul-destroying Plague of *Unbelief*: And that so much the more, that 'tis the Plague which, as it ariseth from Ignorance and Enmity, so at once it *unhingeth* the whole of Revealed Religion; it being Unbelief which keepeth the unregenerate Mind doubting and disputing the Reality of the Hypostatical Union, and of such a Person as the Son of God become Man. It is also this Plague, which giveth rise to the manifold proud *carnal Reasonings* against the Satisfaction of Christ; alledging an Unaccountableness in Sin's being imputed to the Innocent, and in the Righteousness of another, being imputed to the Guilty. And hence also, from this cursed Root, springeth the *actual Contempt* of all the gracious Offers of Christ, and of the great Salvation through him, together with a secret Heart-mocking of all the eternal

Blessed-

Bleſſedneſs or Miſery ſaid to depend upon the Reception or Rejection of the Redeemer: and finally, an habitual Hardneſs of Heart and Stupidity under all the Means of Grace. All which Inſtances would be particularly condeſcended upon, as ſo many undeniable Proofs of *predominant Unbelief*, 1 *Cor.* 1. 23. *Heb.* 3. 12, 19.

After all which, the corrupt *Fountain* of the Luſts of the *Fleſh*, and of the *Mind*, ſending daily forth Thouſands of abominable Thoughts, Deſires and Deſigns, would alſo be laid open, *Matth.* 15. 19.

But now while I ſpeak of Miniſters preaching upon all the preceding Heads, towards the Diſcovery of the *Sinfulneſs* of Man's Nature unto the Unconverted; I do not ſo much underſtand a ſimple inſiſting on them, but rather, 1. A particular Condeſcendance upon the clear undeniable *Evidences* of the foreſaid Plagues; upon which account I have enlarged a little the more in ſpeaking of them. And then, 2. *Cloſe Expoſtulation* with the Conſciences of Hearers, appealing them whether or not theſe Evidences are indeed with them: Upon which, 3. There would be an inferring their dead unconverted State and Condition, together with the Neceſſity of Regeneration. In diſcourſing all which, there ought certainly to be the greateſt Plainneſs and Cloſeneſs of Reaſoning that Miniſters poſſibly can attain unto, *Jer.* 4. 3, 4, 14. *Ezek.* 33. 11.

Theſe things being premiſed towards the Conviction of the *Sinfulneſs* of Nature, there would ſomething alſo be inſiſted on, towards the cauſing blind unconverted Sinners clearly to diſcern the great Sinfulneſs of their *Life* and Converſation, *Iſa.* 58. 1.

And here, I humbly conceive, that, 1. There would be a serious grave *Enumeration* of the prevailing Sins of the Congregation; the Minister with an awe of God accusing the Rebellious among his People of their avowed and repeated Transgressions of the Law of the Great God. Thus we find the Prophet *Ezekiel*, in a most majestical and particular manner libelling *Jerusalem*, Chap. 22. 6, to 13. And here it may not be amiss, that Conscience also be put in Mind of the manifold secret gross Abominations known only to God, and it self; the very mentioning of which would confound the Guilty. 2. It would seem promising towards Conviction, that Ministers should appeal the Consciences of the Unconverted, if ever from Respect to the Divine Command and Glory, they made conscience of one Thought, Word or Action? or if all their Life they ever performed one Duty, or abstained from one Sin, from the foresaid Principle and End? Or rather, upon the other hand, whether or not they must acknowledge, that their own *Will* hath been their supream Rule, and their selfish sinful Pleasures and worldly Interests intirely their last End? From all which, there would, 3. arise a close Reasoning with such Persons, inferring unanswerably, that the whole of their Conversation, whether Natural, Civil, or Religious, must certainly have been nothing else than an *intire unbroken Course* and Tract of Sin and Rebellion, in respect either of Omissions or Commissions.

To all which, if Ministers shall in the last place subjoin the great Article of *Gospel Sins*, such as daily *Contempt* of the Offers of Christ, *quenching* of the Spirit of God in his Reproofs and warm Motions, and their dealing *treacherously* after Vows and Resolutions;

lutions; it is impossible but Conscience, if not absolutely seared, must at least in some measure become confounded and self condemned. And what might be the Issue thereof who knows? For sometimes where the Spirit of God doth not immediately convert, yet it convinceth and civilizeth, and afterwards a saving Change is wrought; and whatever be the Issue, the Holy Ghost is positive, that *open Rebuke is better than secret Love*, Prov. 27. 5.

And thus having now spoken a little of the manner of discovering the Sinfulness of Nature and Life; I shall next offer some few Thoughts in relation to the Second Head, to wit, Ministers laying open the Greatness of the *Wrath* and *Misery* into which sinful Man is fallen.

And here considering Man's natural *Blindness* and *Stupidity*, together with the great Satisfaction he finds in sinful Pleasures, from which there ariseth a mocking and flouting Boldness against all the Alarms and Threatnings, whether of the Law or of the Gospel; there is certainly the greatest need of Ministers being not only most plain and positive in their Declarations of this miserable State; but also of their chusing the most close, convincing and affecting Arguments they possibly can, towards the *bringing home* of this important Truth unto Conscience.

Towards the accomplishing of which, the following *Method* in preaching on this Head, is humbly proposed.

As first, seeing that *Death*, or all Misery, enter'd by Sin, *Rom.* 5. 12. it seems most orderly, and proper, first of all to open up the *offensive* and *malignant Nature* of Sin; because thereby the rational Conscience will be most convincingly brought to believe the great and terrible Punishment due

unto

unto it. And therefore 'tis clear that Ministers would be most particular in discoursing the intrinsick moral Evil of Sin; shewing it in its Nature to be direct Enmity against God, and to be that which draws a Stroke at the Glory of all the Divine Perfections, contradicteth the Divine Holiness, despiseth the Divine Goodness, contemneth the Divine Omniscience, slighteth the Divine Justice, tusheth at the Divine Power, and mocketh at the Divine Truth and Faithfulness in the Threatnings. All which being voluntarily done to please an irregular corrupt Inclination, and that by a dependent mortal Earthworm, against the Soveraign Almighty God, who is it that can sufficiently declare the God-dishonouring and provoking Nature of Sin?

These *Heads* being duly enlarged upon, in relation to *Sin*, cannot but afford a considerable rational Discovery of its dreadful Guilt and Desert; and therefore, Secondly, There would next be a plain Declaration of the *Divine Wrath* and terrible Judgments threatned by a Holy, Just, and Jealous God against impenitent Sinners. In order to which, God's peremptory Threatnings, *1st*, of continued *impendent Wrath* above their Heads while they live, he being a God who is *angry with the Wicked every Day*, Psal. 7. 11. and *2dly*, of *inevitable Condemnation*, and Damnation at the long run, where Evangelical Repentance doth not prevent; and herein the positive joint Testimony of both Old and New Testament Threatnings, would be very fully declared, *Psal.* 9. 17. *Mark* 16. 16. *Luke* 13. 3.

But withall, however these general Directions, if observed, may be of some use in this matter; yet certainly (considering the stupid obstinate Party Ministers have to do with) there would be a

far

far more *particular*, demonstrative, and full Account given of the Misery of unregenerate, unbelieving, impenitent Sinners, than any thing expressed by the Premisses. And considering how particular and full the Scriptures are this way, so much is undoubtedly expected of all the faithful Ministers of the Gospel, *Ezek.* 3. 17, 18.

And therefore a clear Description of their *Misery* from the Womb to the Grave, in their Life, Death, Resurrection, Judgment, and Eternity, seems proper to be sounded aloud in their Ears.

In order to which the following *Topicks* or Considerations may be improven: As first, All Men by Nature, their being *the Children of Wrath*, and lying infallibly under the Threatning of Death in the first Covenant, by reason of the Breach of the same, *Gen.* 2. 17. *Eph.* 2. 3. And towards making the Impression of their Guilt and Danger the more deep and affecting, the great Article of innumerable *actual Transgressions* against both Tables, would also be brought to remembrance; and more particularly, Conscience may be appealed as to *gross* and *heinous* Sins, calling aloud upon a Holy and Just God to proceed unto Punishment. All which being done, some close Expostulations would ensue:

Such as, to enquire, 1. If even the very *Light of Nature* doth not teach, that the Rational Dependent Creature ought absolutely to live and act to the Glory of its Creator, in perfect Love and Obedience. 2. To ask if Sin hath not intirely corrupted the whole of the Human Nature and Conversation, rendering them contrary to the Holy Divine Nature and Law: So that instead of Love and Obedience, there is a secret *habitual Enmity* and Opposition in the Will unto all that is good,

good, and thereupon a Course of Omissions and Commissions in the Life and Walk. 3. Upon this to interrogate, if unregenerate Man be not acting quite contrary to the principal Designs and *Ends* of his Creation, even absolutely disobeying and dishonouring God, for whose Glory he was made. And therefore, 4. To propose, if a God essentially and *necessarily* Holy can ever be of such impure Eyes as to behold or approve Iniquity. And thereupon, 5. To appeal the Conscience, if an *infinitely Wise Agent* can ever be supposed to create and preserve a noble rational Creature in vain, or only to dishonour him and rebel against him; or whether on the other hand, the Glory of the Divine Wisdom, Holiness, Majesty, Justice and Power, do not all evidently require, that God should certainly punish all unholy impenitent Sinners, in making them for the Glory of his Justice, who would not be obliged to the Riches of his Grace and Mercy. Upon all which, 6. Conscience would be next reasoned with, about the *Positiveness* of the Divine Threatnings against all Men out of Christ, and under the first Covenant; such as *Gal.* 3. 10. *Rom.* 2. 8, 9. Which Threatnings would be insisted upon, as the Words of the Great, Holy and Jealous God, the Glory of whose Faithfulness renders it impossible for one Jot or Tittle of any of them to fail.

And therefore, as a *Conclusion* from all the Premisses, it would be inferred, that all Men by Nature, and while estranged from Christ and Grace, *are liable to the Wrath and Curse of God by reason of Original Sin, and multiplied actual Transgressions*: Yea so liable, that for any thing known to Man concerning this or the other particular Person, there is nothing between them and Hell, save the Breath

Breath of their Noſtrils, which an offended and provoked Deity can inſtantly blow out. Accordingly we find our Lord moſt explicite and poſitive on theſe two Heads; to wit, that, 1. All Men out of Chriſt are condemned already, to wit, by reaſon of the Threatning and Curſe in the firſt Covenant, *Gen.* 2. 17. *John* 3. 18. *Gal.* 3. 10. And, 2. That this Night the Souls of unregenerate Men, may be called to Judgment, *Luke* 12. 20. *Matth.* 3. 10.

2. The Goſpel having now ſo far declared the *Miſery* of the Natural Eſtate of Ungodly Men, I humbly conceive the lamentable and wretched Concomitants and Conſequents of this guilty, unreconciled and dangerous Condition, would next be held forth.

Such as 1. That as Man's natural Eſtate, (as hath been cleared) is a State of Condemnation, in reſpect of Guilt; ſo 'tis alſo, 2. An Eſtate of Death in regard of the abſolute want of Spiritual Life, *Epheſ.* 2. 1. And therefore, 3. It muſt likewiſe be an *Impotent State* as to all Spiritual Good; ſo that if *one ſincere Groan* for Sin, as it diſhonoureth God, or *one ſincere Deſire* Chriſt-ward, towards Union or Communion with him, would gain Heaven; yet it is impoſſible for unregenerate Man, *John* 6. 44. 4. Upon this, it muſt alſo certainly be a State of *Non-acceptance*, and that both as to Perſon and Performances: For Man naturally being no ways united to Chriſt either for Life or Righteouſneſs, it is evident that all, even the *beſt Religious Performances* muſt be at moſt but *dead Works*, without the leaſt of Love to God, reſpect to his Command, or Eye to his Glory. And ſuppoſe, they had ſomething of Sincerity in them, yet conſidering the manifold Short-comings, ſinful Mix-

Mixtures, which cleave to the most Holy Duties of the greatest Saints, they would never in themselves prove acceptable unto an Infinitely Holy and Just God, who will have a Righteousness absolutely Perfect to proceed upon, in order to our Acceptance, *Phil.* 3. 9. And as for the Person of the Performer, while Unregenerate, if God set his Eye there, behold what a mass of inward Darkness, Enmity, Unbelief, Hypocrisie, Self-righteousness, Lusts of the Flesh and Mind, shall he find in the Bosom of the most *polished Moralist* that engageth with Religion, *Ezek.* 33. 31, 32. *Luke* 18. 14. So that both Person and Performances, must undoubtedly prove only a weariness and burden unto a Holy and Heart-searching God, who cannot take delight in any Services, without Truth in the inward Parts, *Isa.* 1. 13, 14. *Psalm* 51. 6.

Again, 5. From the Premisses, it's no less evident, that a natural Estate must be a State of grievous *Bondage* and *Captivity to Sin and Satan*: For as hath been said, there being no *opposite Power* or Party of Grace against Sin in the Man, Iniquity must thereupon certainly have the Throne; and if so, then the whole Powers of the Soul; Mind, Will and Affections, together with the whole Members of the Body in their several actings must be Sin and Satan's devoted Servants, to think, contrive, determine, speak and act, according to Pleasure, *Eph.* 2. 2, 3. 'Tis true, an All-wise God holds both Satan's Chain, and the Reins of indwelling Sin by an over-ruling Providence, but still it's equally certain, that Satan (that living Head of the Body of Sin and Death) doth so far sit at the Helm of the whole of an Unregenerate Man's Conversation, that not only he

he can do nothing elſe but ſin and offend, *Pſalm* 10. 5. but alſo is oftentimes hurried at Satan's Pleaſure, even into ſuch groſs Abominations and Villanies, as are contrary, to the Light, Reproofs, Reſolutions and Vows of his own Conſcience, *Mark* 6. 26, 27. And 6. It muſt alſo be an Eſtate of *Wrath* and *Curſe*, wherein the Perſon, is not only unreconciled but loathed by God; and all his Enjoyments coming only from common Providence, do but feed to the ſlaughter, and bear Witneſs againſt the miſimprover, *Deut.* 28. 16, 17. Upon all which, Conſcience would be appealed, whether or not, a Man in ſuch a State as this, who is every Moment in hazard of utter Deſtruction; and who, while he lives, can only increaſe Guilt, and thereby treaſure up Wrath, and who let him toil never ſo much in religious Performances, ſtill he labours in vain, and only wearieth himſelf and his Maker, and in fine, who is bleſſed in nothing, but curſed in his very Bleſſings: I ſay, let Conſcience be obliged to anſwer it; can the whole fulneſs of the lower World, or the Poſſeſſion thereof, make ſuch a Man happy?

But now after all this Reaſoning, and to ſet the whole of the preceding Conſiderations the cloſer home, by no means would Miniſters omit the declaring the *Terror of the Lord*, in whoſe Name they are to perſwade Men to fly from the Wrath to come, 2 *Cor.* 5. 11.

And for this end, There would be an inſiſting, 1. Upon the *Certainty* of the Wrath of God againſt all Impenitent Sinners; and that not only from the peremptorineſs of the Threatnings expreſſed in his Word, but from the Neceſſity of God's glorifying his Eſſential Infinite Holineſs, Juſtice, Maje-

Majesty and Dominion, in relation to his rational Creatures: For nothing can be more evident, than that a God *Infinite* in *Holiness* must of Necessity hate Sin; and a God *Infinite* in *Justice* must of Necessity punish it; and a God Infinite in Majesty must of Necessity resist the proud, and break in Pieces the obstinate and rebellious. Accordingly, it deserveth Remark, that after all the Proclamations of *Goodness*, *Long-suffering* and *Mercy*, expressed *Exod.* 34. 6, 7. God qualifieth all with an Assurance, *That he will by no means clear the Guilty.* Again, 2. Towards proclaiming the Greatness and *Terribleness* of the Divine Wrath, the most convincing and weighty Considerations would be adduced. Such as, 1. That it is the Wrath of a *God*, and if so, who then knows the Power thereof, *Psalm* 90. 11. For, being the Wrath of him who *created* Man, he must certainly know how to *counteract* all the Human Powers, and to cross all the human Desires and Appetites, and so render rebellious Man inconceivably and most exquisitely miserable. And therefore no wonder, if upon this Account, we are called to fear him, *Who cannot only kill the Body, but kill the Soul also, and throw both into Hell-fire.* 2. The remarkable *Descriptions* of this Wrath from the Word of God would be brought to Remembrance, in which the Holy Ghost must collect all the most terrible Things in Nature, to set it out by; such, as Snares, Fire, Brimstone, and horrible Tempest, *Psalm* 11. 6. Such as, Indignation, Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish, Chains, utter Darkness, gnashing of Teeth; *Rom.* 2. 8, 9. The Import of all which would be opened up.

3. The

3. The dreadful *Properties* of this Wrath would next be proclaimed; as that, 1. 'Tis to be *flaming Wrath*; moſt vehement and exquiſite, 2 *Theſſ.* 1. 7, 8, 9. So that *Nebuchadnezzar's* fiery Furnace ſeven Times heated, was but like Fire painted on the Wall, in Compariſon of what this Wrath really is. Neither can it be otherwiſe, conſidering that it is a Fire kindled by the breath of the Lord of Hoſts, and blown up by the Divine Juſtice, Jealouſie and Power infinitely offended; and therefore, 2. It muſt alſo certainly be *Everlaſting* Wrath: This Fire muſt be unquenchable, and this Worm can never die: For the finite Creature not being capable of Infinite Puniſhment, in Point of weight, (which the Infinite Offence in Sin deſerveth) this Wrath muſt therefore be Infinite in Point of Duration. And if ſo, who can deſcribe an Eternity of Divine Wrath. O Eternity, Eternity, endleſs Eternity! Who can ſum up its Years?

4. Some of the moſt ſpeaking and *alarming Inſtances* of the Divine Power and Wrath would be brought forth, ſuch as God's caſting down, and that of a ſudden, the mighty innumerable Hoſt of *ſinning Angels*, and that from the higheſt Heavens, into the loweſt Hell; ſuch as his drowning a *World* at once; his raining Fire and Brimſtone upon *Sodom*; his making ſtout-hearted *Cain*, a Terror to himſelf; his cauſing the Earth to open and ſwallow down the wicked Company of *Corah* and *Dathan*; his bringing down proud *Nebuchadnezzar* to eat Graſs with the Beaſts of the Field; his devouring *Herod* by Worms, while in the mean Time, he thought himſelf a God. Upon all which, it may not be improper to appeal the Conſcience; if any Earth-worm can be Party

for this God. And to interrogate whether or not, if once his Wrath be but kindled a little, they must surely be blessed, who have put their Trust in him? *Psalm* 2. 12.

Besides all the preceding *Topicks* towards declaring the Misery of Man's natural Estate, there is one more which the Apostle remarkably insisteth upon, and that is, that Men in Nature, are without Christ, and Aliens from the Common-wealth of *Israel*, and Strangers from the Covenants of Promise, having no Hope, and without God in the World, *Eph.* 2. 12. Which Argument if clearly opened up, as to its Import, and suitably inforced, must be acknowledged to be a very weighty and important Reasoning. For tho' its literal Sense must be granted to respect the State and Condition of the *Ephesians* while without the Church of God, and utter Strangers to the Gospel; yet as to its Matter (abstract from external Communion with the visible Church) it is in reality the Condition of Unregenerate Men, even within the Church. For tho' they hear and read of Christ, yet it is but as it were the *meer sound* of his Name, as what *Darius* heard and spoke of the God of *Daniel*; they continuing still absolute Strangers to all spiritual saving Union and Communion with him, and consequently can be none of God's true *Israel*, who must be born again, and become *Jews* inwardly. As also not being united to Christ by Faith, they can have no special Title or saving Interest in any of the Promises of the Covenant. And so must certainly be without all Hope of any Good, or real Blessing from the Hand of God, in Time or Eternity. But the Expression most remarkable of all is, that they are *without God* in the World: Meaning, that

that they have no saving experimental Knowledge of him. They look at his glorious Heavens, but see him not; they read his Word, but hear him not; they enter his Courts, but neither behold his Glory nor Power in the Sanctuary; they partake of his Ordinances and sit at his Table, but feed not their Souls at all upon him. Briefly, they are without the Knowledge of God, the Favour of God, the Image of God, the Fellowship of God. So that they are as much without God, as to any saving Manifestation or Communion, as if there were not a God in the World. And if so, what Man or Angel can sufficiently describe the Misery of this natural State; in which Men are first, without God and all saving Good from him; and in which next, Men have this great God, and all the mighty Divine Perfections engaged against them, to render them miserable in this Life, and in that which is to come, *Luke* 12. 58, 59.

After all these Considerations towards proclaiming the Misery of a natural State (which are but as short *Minutes*, unto the full, close, pathetical and awakening Arguments, which such an important Subject deserveth) I shall only subjoin,

That it may be found most proper at the close of such Sermons, to take off the several *Secret Reasonings*, by which Satan endeavours to elude the Force of the most alarming Arguments that possibly can be used, by the most faithful Gospel Minister.

Such as, That the Wicked greatly prosper, and are more free of Bonds and Afflictions, than the Godly; and that there is no reality in the Divine Threatnings; and that they have yet many Years betwixt them and Death; and that a Death-bed Repentance, and Cry for Mercy, will serve for

all. These, and the like *Evasions* would particularly be confuted, by shewing, that there is no real Blessedness or solid Evidence of special Favour in the greatest Temporal Prosperity, *Eccl.* 9. 2. And that the very first Threatning in the Garden, *Gen.* 2. 17. Though it was Man's first Fault and Transgression, is so evidently and experimentally fulfilled upon the Children of Men, that there is not the least Ground left, for disputing the Truth and Faithfulness of what remains. And that, as to many Years; this Night their Souls may be required of them, *Luke* 12.20. And as for the sufficiency of a Death-bed Repentance, that they would consider, *That strait is the way to Life, and that few there be that find it*; and that the Righteous themselves, scarcely are saved, even after their working out (for many Years) their Salvation with Fear and Trembling, 1 *Pet.* 4. 18. But knowing that every faithful Minister of Christ will set himself to discourse closely and convincingly, the several false Reasonings of the grand Deceiver; I shall not further enlarge, having offered these few Thoughts only as a *Memorandum*, rather than as any Directory upon such a great and concerning Subject.

Having now spoken a little of the Truths of the Gospel relative to the displaying the *Misery* of the unconverted; it remains, that Men should next be convinced of their *absolute Impotency* to save and deliver themselves from this woful Estate of Sin and Misery; which was the Third General Head proposed, for holding forth Man's lapsed Condition. Accordingly we find our Lord positive, that it is only the *Sick* (*i. e.*) the convinced humbled Sinner, that will seek for, and value the Physician, *Mark* 2. 17.

And

And therefore towards the convincing Sinners of their absolute *Impotency* and Disability for saving themselves, these Three Discoveries seem to be proper: As, *First*, To hold out, what *Graces* and Duties are absolutely necessary to their obtaining Salvation. And, *Secondly*, Thereupon to appeal their Consciences, how far they are *estranged* in Heart and Life from the foresaid Graces and Performances. Yea, *Thirdly*, How on the contrary, the opposite spiritual Plagues with their corrupt Produce, are in great Power, predominant and reigning in them, *Jer.* 4. 14.

As to what concerneth the first Head, 'tis evident from the Scriptures, that Ministers have access greatly to enlarge in shewing the Necessity, 1. Of the saving *Knowledge* of the Mystery of God in Christ, reconciling the World to himself; without which the Mind cannot discern the attractive Glory, Fulness and Suitableness of the Object of Faith, *John* 6. 45. And, 2. Of saving *Faith*, without which the Soul cannot cordially embrace and choose a whole Christ in all his Offices, as the Wisdom and Power of God, in order to Justification and Sanctification; and, 3. Of sincere Evangelical *Repentance*, without which there can be no mourning for Sin, as it dishonoureth God, and pierced Christ; nor any perfect hatred of Sin, or true practical Reformation in Heart and Life: All which being *Essential* to true Holiness, must be absolutely necessary towards Salvation, *Mark* 16. 16. *Luke* 13. 3. *Heb.* 12. 14.

2. These Essentials of Religion, and necessary Prerequisites unto Salvation being once clearly held forth; the absolute *Estrangement* from those Graces and those Performances, together with the opposite Spiritual Plagues, would next be in-

sisted upon: Appealing the Consciences of Unregenerate Men, with respect to the following Particulars.

Such as, *First*, How, instead of the saving Knowledge of God in Christ, there is either with them, the greatest *Darkness* and habitual Forgetfulness of God; or if there be any Speculative Knowledge of God, or of the Mediator, how it is but only meerly Notional, enlightning the Head a little; and at most but producing something of distinctness of Thought, and Expression in Gospel Truths, but no ways drawing the Soul out after God in Christ, as the chief Good, or producing Holiness in Heart or Life. And, *Secondly*, How in the Place of saving Faith, there is a secret *Doubting* and *Disputing* against the Truth and Certainty of Christ's Person, Natures and Offices, and a great many carnal Reasonings against a possibility of Salvation by a crucified Christ, or the Justification of a Sinner by the Righteousness of another. Yea, how there is a secret *Contempt* of Christ, in the great and rich offers of himself, and his Grace, which are tendered in the Gospel; so that many weary more of hearing Sermons which preach Christ, and the wonderful Contrivance of Salvation thro' him, than what they do of any other Subjects. And if at any Time there be a general overly *Assent* to Gospel Truths relative to our Lord, or some passing Desires to be reconciled by him; yet behold what secret mixing of, and leaning unto their own Righteousness along with his Sufferings, is to be found with many.

And as to the embracing him in his *Kingly* Office, who can fully declare the manifold secret sinful *Reserves*, which are with Thousands of Professors?

ſeſſors? Some in the midſt of their higheſt Profeſſions this way, ſecretly quarrelling the Strictneſs, Spirituality and Extent of his Law: More particularly, ſuch Precepts, as require Purity in Heart, Rectitude in Principles, Motives and Ends; or call for a daily Courſe of Mortification; or oblige unto Spirituality in Frame, Livelineſs in Duties of Worſhip, or exemplary ſhining Holineſs in Converſation. And in the Matter of giving him the Heart, or loving him above all; how many are they, who while profeſſing ſo to do, yet are ſecretly Eſteeming, Deſiring and Delighting in Riches, Honours, Pleaſures, far more than what ever they did in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, or in the greateſt Bleſſings of his Covenant, *Ezek.* 33. 31, 32. I ſay, Men's Conſciences being appealed as to theſe Things, it is impoſſible but the very *Contraries* of true and ſaving Faith muſt be ſecretly acknowledged to be with them.

Again, *Thirdly*, Inſtead of ſincere *Repentance*, it would be held forth, how on the contrary, there is a rooted Heart-love even unto many known Sins, a ſecret Living in the Practice of them; together with a ſecret allowed Enmity at ſeveral known Duties, and an habitual Omiſſion of the ſame: So that in place of ſincere ingenuous Confeſſion, Mourning, turning or flying to the Blood of Sprinkling, behold a ſecret Heart-riſing at Reproof and Counſel, a hiding of Iniquity, a ſecret Rejoicing in it, and a fixed Reſolution, (notwithſtanding of all Goſpel-Exhortations, Threatnings or Promiſes) to walk on after the wicked Imaginations and Purpoſes of their own Hearts. And further, if at any Time there be any promiſing Convictions, Fears, good Inclinations, behold how, either they are preſently *choaked*

ked with the Throng of worldly Cares and sensual Enjoyments; or if they continue some little time, yet are so *resisted*, that at length they quite die out; so that all the Resolutions, Vows, and temporary Reformations which proceeded from the same, quickly vanish and turn to nothing. Upon all which, if Conscience be closely interrogate, 'tis evident that the unregenerate Soul's Pretensions to true Repentance must quickly fall to the Ground.

If any should here object, that the foresaid Considerations and Reasonings infer only Man's being naturally without the Essentials of Religion, necessarily prerequisite unto Salvation; but that they do not prove Man's want of *Power* to perform them.

In answer to this, it would be considered, that a *Conviction* of Disability in Salvation-work is so hard to fix upon blind and self-conceited Man, that Ministers must gradually go to work towards impressing the same; that so the Conviction may be the more clear, full and efficacious. And therefore to shew Men first, what of necessity *must be*, before they can be saved; and next to evince, that they are not only without these Graces, but that the *opposite Plagues* are undeniably with them; must certainly tend very much to pave the Way for the humbling Conviction of spiritual Impotency.

And as for closer Reasonings, as the whole Scripture Topicks against the *Arminian* Doctrines furnish sufficient Mediums to be improven this way; so I humbly conceive, that interrogating, 1. Whether or not God must be acknowledged to know Man perfectly as to any Power or Perfection with him now since the Fall? And thereupon, 2. To enquire, if the God of Truth can be suppo-

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ſed to deſcribe fallen Man otherwiſe in his Word, than what he really knows him to be? Upon which, 3. Thoſe Texts in Scripture, which moſt clearly and poſitively affirm Man's being naturally dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins, and his want of Power to come to Chriſt, till the Father draw him; yea, which aſſert, that he cannot of himſelf think *one good Thought*, and that every Imagination of his Heart is only evil continually; would be adduced and cloſely improven on this Head.

Again, as Scripture, ſo even the *Experience* of Sinners themſelves may be made uſe of and argu'd from in this matter; and that by appealing their Conſciences on theſe two Points: 1. If they can inſtance (and their Hearts not condemn them) ſo much as any one Duty which they ever performed truly from Love to God, Reſpect to his Command, and with an eye to his Glory, as was ſaid before on another Head: or whether all their Duties were not rather done only to keep Peace in Conſcience, and to make up a Righteouſneſs of their own, to ſtand in before God, *Luke* 18. 11. And thereupon, 2. To appeal them, whether or not at any time, when the Goſpel is cloſely inſiſting on the *Eſſentials* of Religion, and preaching the Neceſſity of a new Nature, of a Heart right with God, and of a ſuperlative Love to Chriſt above all other Objects, and of Spirituality and Livelineſs in Duties of Worſhip, and of the Hatred of every falſe Way, and of a cordial Reſpect to all God's Commands; there be not ſecret *Heart-riſings* and Murmurings againſt ſuch Truths, accounting them hard Sayings, and ſuch as cannot be born. Yea more, 3. Let Conſcience be interrogate, whether even in thoſe Eſſays towards Repentance and Reformation, which at times are conſtrained by the Influence

Influence of the common Motions of the Spirit upon the Word or Rod, they are not sensible of such a Mixture of Darkness, Enmity, Sensuality, that there is an inconceivable predominant *Backwardness* and Heart-opposition to serious universal Godliness: and on the other hand, of such an impetuous strong *Inclination* to old Idols and former Sins, that they cannot either in Affection or Practice, continue to abstain from them, but must with the Dog go back again to the Vomit, *Luke* 11. 24, 25, 26. Upon all which the Gospel certainly hath the most clear and solid ground to conclude with the Prophet, *Jer.* 13. 23. *Can the* Ethiopian *change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots? then may ye also do good, that are* accustomed *to do evil:* And thereupon to cry, that *Israel* hath so destroy'd himself, that his Help is only in and from God, *Hos.* 13. 9.

As these *Reasonings* may be proper (generally speaking) for the Bulk of unregenerate Gospel-hearers, so with respect to the more Judicious, no doubt a more succinct and equally nervous Method may be fallen upon; such as first, the insisting on the *Impossibility* of Man's both dying and living spiritually in his Fall. And, 2*dly*. Upon the *Necessity* of an Almighty creating Power to command Light to shine out of Darkness, and Faith out of Unbelief, and Love out of Enmity, and Holiness out of Sin, 2 *Cor.* 4. 6. As also, 3*dly*. The declaring the Unaccountableness of Christ's Death, towards restoring Man to spiritual and eternal Life, if Matters stand so, that Man naturally hath a Power upon moral Suasion to turn himself to God, and to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ in order to Salvation. As, 4*thly*. The shewing how the Praise and Glory of Salvation must certainly in a great measure be *restrained* from

from the Glorious Redeemer, and ascribed to our selves, and the Freedom and Power of our own Wills, if this *Arminian* Doctrine hold true. All which are such gross Absurdities, as neither Scripture nor Reason can possibly approve of, once allowing the Truth of the Divine History of the Fall of Man. But having enlarged on the several Heads relative to Man's *lapsed* Condition, more than what was at first designed; and knowing that all conscientious Ministers, to whom the Salvation of immortal Souls, and the Glory of Christ, are Matters of the greatest moment, will spend the Strength of their Thoughts in contriving how to reach the Heart, and to lay Siege by the Gospel to the Consciences of Sinners; that so they may either turn from Sin, and flee unto the Lord Jesus Christ, or else be render'd inexcusable: I shall therefore add no more, save only cordially to wish, that all Ministers, according to *their Measure*, may through Grace be able to appeal their Flocks, at parting with them, as what the Apostle *Paul* was in case to do at his departure from the *Ephesians*, Acts 20. 26. *Wherefore I take you to record this Day, that I am pure from the Blood of all Men.* And Verse 31. *Therefore watch and remember, that by the Space of three Years, I ceased not to warn every one Night and Day with Tears.*

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

The Lord Jesus Christ being the only Remedy for fallen Man, the Law ought not to be preached without the Gospel, lest awaken'd Consciences run to Extreams. In order to the preaching Christ aright, a Scriptural-rational Account would be made of the Covenant of Redemption; as giving rise to and making way for Salvation through him. In holding forth Christ, as the proper Object *of saving justifying Faith, his wonderful Person, Natures and Offices would all be opened up; but especially the* Hypostatical Union *arising therefrom, together with the necessary Grounds pleading for the same in Man's Redeemer. Our Lord's essential Divine Fulness, as laying Foundation for his Mediatorial All-sufficiency, would be particularly declared. The running a demonstrative rational Parallel betwixt the Fulness and Abilities of the wonderful Person* God-Man, *and the whole supposable Wants, Plagues, Necessities and Desires of poor needy Sinners, is a great part of Gospel-Preaching. Ministers who do not endeavour a most distinct, close, and convincing Way, in holding out the* Fulness *and* Suitableness *of Christ unto lost Sinners, but rest in a general superficial Description, are in so far exceeding unfaithful to the Glorious Redeemer.*

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THE preceeding Chapter having made account of the *Topicks*, which ſeem moſt promiſing towards the diſcovering the Sinfulneſs, Miſery and Impotency of Man's lapſed State and Condition; it remains that the proper Way of preaching and declaring the *Remedy* provided in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, ſhould next fall under conſideration; that ſo Miniſters may not awaken Mens Conſciences in order to Deſpair, but in order to Hope and Salvation.

And therefore in the Entry on this Head, *Two Things* ſeem proper to be premiſed: As firſt, that however cloſe and alarming Miniſters are called to be in preaching the Law; yet ſtill it ſeems not to be ſo ſafe for any Goſpel-Miniſter, abſolutely, in ſeveral Sermons, to act the Part of *Boanerges*, ſo as not to give at leaſt ſome ſhort Hints or other of the rich and *Free Grace* of the Goſpel, leſt there ſhould be ſome awaken'd Jaylor or other, who through Satan's *Devices* ſhould be in hazard of running into the greateſt Extreams, *Acts* 16. 29, 30, 31. And to this purpoſe it is very remarkable, that in the ſame Sermon, in which ſome Thouſands were pricked in their Hearts (which perhaps ſome would have thought Accompliſhment enough for the time, and that the Wound ſhould have had acceſs to bleed) yet in the very ſame Diſcourſe, the Doctrine of *Remiſſion of Sins through the Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, along with an Enlargement of very gracious Promiſes, are moſt plainly held forth, *Acts* 2. 37, 38, 39. Yea more, when our Lord, the *All-wiſe Miniſter* of the New Teſtament, was about to preach as cloſe and ſearching a Sermon, as any recorded in the Book of God, behold how cautiouſly he prefaceth the ſame, by pronouncing

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several sorts of Persons (so and so qualified) to be truly *blessed*; and all this, lest among the Multitude any smoaking Flax should be quenched, or bruised Reed broken: as is to be seen at great length, *Matth.* 5. from the 3*d* to the 13*th* Verse, compared with 20, to the End. And therefore a wise Mixture of Law and Gospel (tho' fatal in the Matter of Justification) yet is certainly what promiseth most both towards Conviction and Conversion.

2. And so on the other hand, as the Law would not be preached without the *Gospel*, so neither the Gospel, in relation to the Unconverted, without the *Law*. For as Christ is *the End* of the Law for Righteousness, *Rom.* 10. 4. being ready to furnish sensible humbled Sinners with a perfect Righteousness, which they could not have from the Law; so the Law is *our School-master* to lead us to Christ, by convincing us of our Sin, and condemning us for the same; and thereupon sending us elsewhere to seek for Justification and Salvation, *Gal.* 3. 24. And therefore as nothing tends more to keep self-conceited unconverted Sinners *secure*, than the constant entertaining them with the Doctrine of Peace and Pardon thro' Christ, without any previous faithful and particular Discoveries of their Sin, Misery, and Impotency by Nature; all faithful Ministers, watching in earnest for Souls, would accordingly take care with *John* the Baptist, (that great and wise Herald and Forerunner of our Lord's) first to preach Mens great Guilt and Danger of the Wrath to come, together with the Necessity of Repentance and Faith, and then to cry, *Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the Sins of the World*, Matth. 3. 7, to 13. *John* 1. 29.

These things being premised, I come now to speak directly of the *proper Method* for preaching Christ,

Christ, as the Saviour of lost Sinners; supposing them once to be in some measure instructed and convinced, with respect to their sinful and miserable Condition. And in order to this, 'tis evident, that before our Lord can in a clear, distinct and Soul-engaging manner be represented by the Gospel to the Eye of the Soul, as the glorious and proper Object of justifying and saving Faith; that, 1. His *Eternal Designation* by the Father unto the Mediatory Office, with the mutual Covenant of Redemption ensuing thereupon; and, 2. His wonderful *Person* and *Natures*; and, 3. His suitable and all-sufficient *Offices*, should all be most plainly declared. For supposing Ignorance of any of these three Heads, as to the Substance of them, what Soul is it can be in case to receive or rest aright upon the Lord Jesus Christ for Salvation? And hence the Holy Ghost, by *Isaiah*, hath most remarkably expresst the manner of our coming by Justification through him, in telling us, that it is by his *Knowledge* that *Jehovah*'s righteous Servant shall justify many, Chap. 53. 11. Importing that we must really know and take him up in his Person, Natures and Offices, before ever we can be in case to embrace him by Faith, in order to our Justification.

As to what concerneth the first of these Heads, to wit, the explaining the *Covenant of Redemption* betwixt *Jehovah* and the Mediator; the Subject is so plainly and fully revealed in the Scriptures, both as to the Parties of the Covenant, and the Rise of the said Transaction, and the mutual Stipulations betwixt the said Parties, that there is no need of any Enlargement. So that any who will consult *Isa.* 53. *Psal.* 40. *Psal.* 110. *John* 17. cannot fail of seeing clearly into this great Subject.

I shall therefore only humbly propose, that in preaching on this Head, the more *rational* the Account of it be, so much the more it promiseth to take with the Hearers. And therefore Ministers deducing this Covenant, 1. From the Eternal *Free Love* of God in giving Christ to the lost Elect World, in order to their Redemption, *John* 3. 16. *Ezek.* 16. 6, 7, 8. And 2. From vindictive *Justice* being essential to God, which therefore necessarily required full and compleat Satisfaction, *Exod.* 34. 7. And 3. From the *Impossibility* of finite Man's satisfying the offended Justice of an Infinite God, *Psal.* 40. 6, 7. All which, as they make a *rational* Account of the Rise and Necessity of such a *Mediator* as Christ, so at the same time they demonstrate Reconciliation-work to have been a Performance altogether above *Man*; which cannot but tend to humble and prepare the Sinner for receiving Christ. Accordingly, whoever will particularly consider the Strain of the Holy Ghost in the 53*d* Chapter of *Isaiah*, shall find this Method very much observed.

The second Head to be declared by the Gospel being the *Glorious Person* and wonderful Union of the two Natures in our Redeemer, all faithful Ministers will no doubt endeavour in handling this concerning Subject, to stir up and improve the Gift of God in them, in order to the rendering such a Glorious Redeemer most precious to the Souls of their Hearers. And for this end, I humbly conceive, that whatever other Truths, in relation to the Person of Christ, be insisted upon, that more especially these two should be most particularly cleared: As 1*st*, The absolute *Necessity* of the Hypostatical Union in Man's Redeemer; and 2*dly*, The glorious Fulness and *All-sufficiency* towards

wards compleating Sinners Salvation, which must certainly be in such a wonderful Person as he who is God-Man. Accordingly we find *John* the Baptist, that Great Preacher, after having warned Sinners to flee from the Wrath to come, insisting much upon the Hypostatical Union, in holding out Christ as the *Lamb of God* for taking away the Sins of the World, and also as one who (being the only Begotten of the Father) hath a Fulness in him, out of which we may receive and Grace for Grace, *John* 1. 14, 16, 29, 36.

The *Necessity* of our Redeemer's being *God-Man* in one Person, is most evident from the Consideration, 1. Of Man's sinning. 2. Of an infinite Offence being in Sin, as being against an Infinite God. 3. Of Justice being essential to God, which therefore required, that Sin should be condignly punished. 4. Of the Rule of Justice Procedure with guilty Man, its being the Law; which Law consisting of Precepts, together with an annexed Penalty or Curse, upon supposition of the Breach thereof; it is most clear, before Justice be fully satisfied, that both the Curse must be undergone, and also the Precepts fulfilled, that so guilty Man may be freed from Wrath, and may stand as righteous before God, and thereupon come to be entituled to Eternal Life. Upon all which, 5. Considering God the Party offended to be *Infinite*, and Man the Party offending to be but *finite*; it necessarily followeth, that our Redeemer behooved first to be a Person capable of suffering and obeying, and that in the same Nature which sinned; Seeing Justice essential to the Deity necessarily requireth the Punishment of Sin, and compleat Obedience to the Law. And 2. 'Tis no less clear, that he must also be a Person, who in suffering

and obeying should fully and adequately recompence the infinite Offence in Sin, by *repairing fully* the Honour and Glory, which an Infinite God lost thereby. From all which it's clear, that Man's Redeemer could be none less, nor none other, than the Glorious and Wonderful *God-Man* in one Person. To this purpose it is most remarkable, how when the Apostle *Paul*, in the 8*th* Chapter to the *Romans*, is about to preach and declare the Substance and Marrow of the Gospel, he very much founds the same in giving a rational Account of the Necessity and Reality of this Hypostatical Union in our Lord, Ver. 3 and 4. *For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the Flesh, God sending his own Son, in the Likeness of sinful Flesh, and for Sin condemned Sin in the Flesh: That the Righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit.*

The other Branch relative to the Declaration of the Mediatorial *Fulness* and All-sufficiency arising from this Union, being a Truth which can be best demonstrated from the threefold Offices of Prophet, Priest and King, with which our Lord is anointed; it may accordingly fall in upon that Head, which was the next proposed to be spoken of: And therefore,

3*dly*. In preaching of the Mediatory Offices aright, towards the clear Information of the Mind, and influencing the Will and Affections; the following Method, as it is most scriptural, so it seems most promising.

As first, to declare the *clamant Grounds* with Sinners, upon which Christ was made Prophet, Priest and King, and with an eye to which he was so anointed by God. Accordingly we find *Isaiah*, that Evangelical Prophet, when about to proclaim

claim the Mediatorial Fulneſs of Chriſt to the Church, he particularly condeſcendeth on the ſeveral Plagues and Wants with poor Sinners, which plead ſtrongly for the Execution of all the three Offices, *Iſa.* 61. 1, 2, 3. And therefore any Miniſter, who would preach and commend Chriſt aright in his Mediatory Fulneſs, would undoubtedly inſiſt moſt particularly upon Mens natural groſs Ignorance, great Guilt, and wretched Captivity.

Holding forth how, naturally, Man is moſt *ignorant* of God, of God in Chriſt, of the New Covenant of Grace, of the right way of coming into it, of the Beauty of Holineſs, and of the Evil of Sin; as of all other Truths depending upon theſe. Or if there be ſome Head-knowledge of thoſe Truths, that yet *ſaving Illumination* is wanting, which cauſeth the Soul ſpiritually to diſcern the Import of Goſpel Truths, ſo as to receive them with Faith and Love, and without further Delay, fall in with the two great Goſpel Precepts of Faith and New Obedience. Which ſaving Inſtruction and Knowledge can only come from this great Prophet our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who while his Word is treating with the Ear, can by his Spirit command a ſupernatural ſaving ſpiritual Light to ariſe in the Underſtanding, *Iſa.* 42. 6. 2 *Cor.* 4. 6. And thus the clamant Ground for the Prophetical Office would be moſt particularly and fully declar'd.

And ſo alſo Man's *great Guilt* calling aloud for a Sacrifice to ſatisfy Divine Juſtice, and for a perfect Righteouſneſs to ſtand in before God, in order to Juſtification, would be moſt convincingly inſiſted upon. In order to which, the Conſideration, 1. of the Sinfulneſs of Nature, and 2. of Life and Practice, and 3. of the infinite Holineſs and perfect Juſtice of the Deity, cannot fail of

furnishing sufficient Matter to any Minister towards the Conviction of his Hearers on this Head. Upon all which, the Necessity of the *Priestly Office* would be demonstrate, *Job* 33. 23, 24.

As next the great *Dominion* and reigning Power of Sin, whereby Man through the great Power and Influence of natural Darkness, Unbelief, Enmity and Sensuality, is so dead in Trespasses and Sins, that he not only cannot perform any Spiritual Good, but is also a poor, wretched, constant Captive and Slave to Sin and Satan at their pleasure, *Ephes.* 2. 1, 2. *Luke* 11. 21. I say, this cursed Bondage would also be declared, and thereupon the absolute Necessity of the *Kingly Office*, in order to the breaking the reigning Power of Sin, the subduing our Hearts unto the Obedience of the Gospel, by dethroning Unbelief and Enmity, and giving Faith and Love the ruling Ascendant over them. By which, as two leading Principles, the Soul, who was before rebellious and obstinate, becomes now a most willing and obedient Subject unto the Lord Jesus Christ, *Psal.* 110. 3.

To all which I shall only subjoin, that 'tis true the preceding Truths are so plain, that there was scarce any need of so much as once mentioning them: but when I considered the lamentable Consequences of commending Christ from his Mediatory Offices, only in a general cursory way, without endeavouring previously the particular Conviction of Sinners need of the same; I could not altogether omit some few Sentences as a *Memorandum* this way. More especially finding this Method to have been so closely observed both by the Old and New Testament Ministry, *Isa.* 61. 1, 2, 3. *Rev.* 3. 17, 18. In which places we find Sinners

Plagues

Plagues and Wants so exactly compared with the Offices of Christ, and the Blessings proceeding therefrom; and thereupon the one seen to be so exactly *adjusted* to the other, that it were impossible for an attentive Hearer (when the Gospel preacheth Christ this way) to shun some Thoughts of his Mediatory Fulness, and of the great Suitableness thereof unto ignorant, guilty, and captive Sinners. And therefore it must certainly be one excellent *Rule* to be observed in preaching Salvation through Christ, to wit, the running a *clear Comparison* betwixt the Blessings lost in the first *Adam*, and the Blessings purchased by the second; betwixt Man's natural Plagues, and the glorious Performances of the threefold Office, *Rom.* 5. 12. to the End.

Another and *second Way* of preaching Christ aright in his Mediatory Offices, is that of giving a *clear Idea* and Notion of the *Fulness* that is in our Glorious Redemer towards his fulfilling the said Offices. And in order to this three things seem proper to be done: As first, a rational Account would be given from the Word, of what this *Fulness* in our Redeemer really is: And 2*dly*, How by virtue of it he can and doth act the part of an *extraordinary* Prophet, Priest and King, in order to the compleating the Redemption of Sinners: Upon which, 3*dly*, It would seem most native to proceed unto the tendering *an Offer* of such an all-sufficient and suitable Saviour. These things, I conceive, are the more necessary to be cleared, in regard it is certain, that *general superficial Accounts* of Christ's Fulness and All-sufficiency, without a close scriptural and rational Account of the same, as they are accounted by many, (tho' unjustly) to be but meer Cant and Pulpit-noise, so neither do they

so much tend to beget *Faith* in him, or *Love* unto him.

In declaring the *Fulness* of Christ, two Heads would be discoursed: As 1. His *essential* Divine Fulness; for being truly God equal with the Father, he must thereupon certainly have the same Fulness of Divine Perfections, which the Father hath, from whence all Grace, Gifts and Glory can proceed. Accordingly the Scripture is positive, that *the Fulness of the Godhead dwelleth in him bodily*, *Col.* 2. 9. And certain it is, that as the Assumption of our Nature could add nothing to his immutable Divine essential Perfections and Glory, so it could as little any ways diminish the same. And if so, then 'tis clear, that our Redeemer (tho' now really become Man) yet in Person is really none less than the *Great God*, Infinite in Being, Wisdom, Power, Goodness, and in all the other Divine Excellencies; and consequently must be perfectly well qualified and accomplished for making the most ignorant wise unto Salvation, and the most Obstinate willing and obedient, and (being God-man) the most Guilty innocent and righteous. For what Darkness can stand before Infinite Wisdom, or what Plagues of the strongest Unbelief or Enmity can resist Almighty Power? or what possible Guilt cannot the Blood of God satisfy for, when applied? And thus 'tis evident that Ministers insisting particularly upon Christ's Fulness as God, cannot fail of proclaiming him a most Glorious and All-sufficient Redeemer. And therefore it were to be wished, that this great Truth were most diligently studied, and with a peculiar Distinctness and Enlargement often declared in the Gospel. To which purpose if we consult the Method observed by the Great Apostle, when about to exalt and commend *Christ* to the *Hebrews* above

Moses

Moſes and *Aaron*, and all other Prophets, Prieſts and Kings which ever went before him; and to hold him out as a Saviour able to ſave to the uttermoſt all that ſhould come unto him; we ſhall find that firſt of all he begins with a glorious Deſcription of him from his great Divine Fulneſs and Glory, *Heb.* 1. 2, 3. *Hath in theſe laſt Days ſpoken to us by his Son, whom he hath appointed Heir of all things, by whom alſo he made the Worlds. Who being the Brightneſs of his Glory, and the expreſs Image of his Perſon, and upholding all things by the Word of his Power, when he had by himſelf purged our Sins, ſat down on the Right Hand of the Majeſty on high.*

2. As this eſſential Fulneſs of God is in our Redeemer, ſo there is a *Mediatorial Fulneſs* in him. The great Fountain and Spring of which is the foreſaid Fulneſs, as being by the Conſent of the Adorable Trinity, appointed to be ſet on work and improven by the Perſon of the Son now become God-Man, towards the effectual Execution of all the Mediatorial Offices. 'Tis true the Mediatory Fulneſs always ſuppoſeth and neceſſarily requireth the Covenant of Peace betwixt *Jehovah* and the Mediator, the Incarnation of the Son of God, the Hypoſtatical Union, and the compleat Satisfaction of Juſtice: But ſtill 'tis equally certain, that the great Fountain and Spring giving Life and Vertue unto the whole of the Mediatorial Performances, is the eſſential Fulneſs of the Glorious Divine Perfections, which is with the Son equally with the Father. And hence when the Lord invites all the Ends of the Earth to look unto him for Salvation, the grand enforcing Reaſon is, *For I am God, and there is none elſe*; importing clearly, that it's the eſſential Divine Fulneſs, which giveth Life to all, *Iſa.* 45. 22.

So that while our Lord, as Mediator, executeth the Priestly, Prophetical or Kingly Office, it is nothing else, in Matter of Fact, but only the Son of God, as appointed by *Jehovah*, satisfying Divine Justice in our Nature by the infinite Value of the Blood of God; and so also when he acts the part of a Prophet, it is nothing else but our Lord, by virtue of his infinite Wisdom and Power, along with a preached Gospel, commanding Light to shine out of Darkness, and so gradually more and more illuminating the Mind, till Knowledge at the long run come to Perfection. And so likewise when he cometh forth as a King, it is nothing else but the Divine Omnipotence binding the Strong Man, and spoiling him of his Armour, by breaking the reigning Power of Sin in all its cursed Branches, upon his creating an opposite predominant Principle of *Spiritual Life*, from which as Faith springeth forth, uniting the Soul to Christ, so there also ariseth the two noble Principles of the Love and Fear of God, which gradually becoming stronger and stronger, sweetly rule and influence the Conscience, unto a Course of new and holy Obedience.

So that upon the whole, it is clear, that however the Fulness of Christ contain unsearchable Riches therein, yet it is a thing (complexly taken) most accountable in it self; more especially if we consider it under this Notion, of the Divine Perfections being set on work by the Person God-Man, towards the Accomplishment of the Mediatory Offices. And to this purpose it is exceeding remarkable, that the Apostle *Paul*, when he would give the clearest and most comprehensive View of the Mediatory Fulness, he expresseth himself after this manner, 1 *Cor.* 1. 30. *But of him are ye in Christ*

Jesus

Jesus, who of God is made unto us Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption: As if he had said to the believing *Corinthians*, You are by Faith united to Christ, who being appointed Mediator by God, and having the Fulness of God in him, hath become unto you, in the Execution of the several Offices, Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption. But now after all, that we may behold our inexpressible Obligations to all the Great Three in One; let us remember, that as it pleased the *Father*, that all Fulness should thus dwell in the Son, as the Glorious Living Head of Influences unto his People; so 'tis by the powerful Applications of the *Holy Ghost* (in the Order of Operation) that our Lord's Fulness is improven, towards beginning, carrying on, and perfecting the Elect's Salvation, *John* 16. 8, to 16.

The Gospel having thus once declared the essential Fulness of God to be in our Lord, and having also shewn how it becometh *Mediatorial*; it may next tend considerably to illustrate our Redeemer's All-sufficiency for his Work, to demonstrate from these two, what a *Wonderful* and *Glorious Person* our Lord must be in respect of personal Excellencies and Qualifications towards his Mediatorial Performances: For being *God-Man* in one Person, it is simply impossible, that any necessary or desirable Qualification towards Redemption-work, can be wanting in him; as will more particularly appear,

By considering, 1. That he being the Son of God, equally Infinite in Wisdom with the Father, it was impossible, that either *Jehovah* or he should fall in the least Mistake or wrong Measure in transacting the Eternal Covenant of Redemption. 2. Being truly *God-Man* in one Person, and that in the whole Course of his Active and Passive Obedience

dience in the Elect's room, it is undeniable but this infinitely precious Blood and Obedience (especially being the very Means of Satisfaction to Justice proposed by *Jehovah* himself) must fully repair all the Honour lost unto the Deity, by the Elects Sin and Transgressions, and must bring along an everlasting and perfect Righteousness to all truly interessed therein, 2 *Cor.* 5. 20, 21. 3. As his Satisfaction must thus be compleat, so being God-Man, it is impossible but his *Intercession* also must be always effectual: For being the well-beloved Son, and as Mediator having fully performed his part of the Covenant of Redemption, neither Love nor Justice can refuse him. And as to the manner of his Intercession, considering his deep Concern even under the bloody Sweat in the Garden, to accomplish his Peoples Salvation; as also considering the deep Sympathy and Fellow-feeling of his Peoples Wants and Infirmities, arising from the experimental Knowledge of the Man Christ, 'tis evident that his Intercession must certainly be performed with the greatest Earnestness and most serious Application, *John* 17. 24. *Heb.* 4. 14, 15.

4. Being God-Man, he must certainly have a Fulness and Power in and from himself, as God equal with the Father, to answer his own Intercession, which he makes as Mediator: For being one and the same Essentially with the Father and Holy Ghost, he must be the most High and Supream Being; he must be the Omniscient, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Self-sufficient and All-sufficient God, and consequently can fully answer all Petitions whatsoever relative to his Peoples Salvation. So that he hath all Fulness and Power, even in his own Person, towards his Peoples Illumination, Renovation, Justification, Sanctification and compleat Redemp-

Redemption. And this I take to be the true and principal Import, of our Lord's being termed a Prieſt *after the Order of Melchizedek*, he having a Royal Fulneſs and Power, ariſing from the Divine All-ſufficiency along with Jehovah's Commiſſion; to anſwer all the Demands of his own Interceſſion as Prieſt, *Pſalm* 110. 4. *The Lord hath ſworn, and will not repent, thou art a Prieſt for ever, after the order of Melchizedek.*

Theſe Truths being once cleared, there can remain little or no difficulty in anſwering the Second Head, to wit, how by virtue of this Eſſential and Mediatorial Fulneſs, our Lord can act the part of an *Extraordinary* Prophet, Prieſt and King, towards the accompliſhing the Redemption of Sinners. For, let us but trace the ſeveral and various Conditions of the Elect, and accordingly ſuppoſe their different Applications to the Throne of Grace, and we ſhall preſently ſee, how out of our Lord's Fulneſs, all his People, in all their Conditions may receive full Satisfaction to all their Deſires, till they come to be compleat in him, *John* 1. 16. *Col.* 2. 10.

As *Firſt*, Suppoſing an Elect Sinner, under ſome Senſe of the *great Power* of natural Ignorance, Unbelief and Enmity, crying for a ſenſible Day of God's converting and drawing Power; behold how ſoon our Lord, by virtue of his Almighty Divine Power can ſubdue thoſe Plagues, and create and command a ſaving efficacious Light to ſhine into the Mind, towards diſcovering his own tranſcendent Worth and Excellency, the great Beauty of Holineſs, and Evil of Sin, and thereby pleaſantly determine the Will, to accept of him as offered in the Goſpel, and to turn from Sin unto Righteouſneſs, *Pſalm* 110. 3. *Thy People ſhall be*

be willing in the Day of thy Power, in the Beauties of Holiness, from the Womb of the Morning: Thou hast the dew of thy Youth. And so, 2*dly*, If a Sinner heavy loaden with a Sense of *great Guilt*, and trembling for fear of the Wrath of God, be in a Gospel-way supplicating for pardoning Mercy, behold how quickly our Lord, by virtue of his passive and active Obedience, can reconcile him to God, and cloath him with a perfect Righteousness, in which he may stand and abide the Tryal, even of Justice it self. Thus the penitent *Prodigal*, had presently the *best Robe* brought forth unto him, *Luke* 15. 20.

Again, 3*dly*, If at any Time, a gracious Soul fall under a *Spiritual Decay*, so that the several Graces of the Spirit are all languishing, and little of sensible Light, Life or Strength left with the Christian; behold upon Application to the Throne of Grace, how soon our Lord, as the God and Fountain of all Grace, can by the fresh Gales and Breathings of his Spirit, blow upon the decayed Graces, and cause them as so many fragrant Spices to flow forth, *Song* 4. 12, 16. And so also, 4*thly*, When a Believer under long *Desertion*, applies for the Light of God's Countenance; how easie must it be for our Lord, with whom the Fountain of all Light is, to clear up unto the Person, the Work of Grace and of Faith to be in the Soul, and thereby discover a Covenant-relation, and sure Title to all the great Promises therein contained, *Psalm* 40. 1, 2, 3, 4. So likewise, 5*thly*, Upon Application made by a gracious Soul, under heavy and perplexing Temptations, who perhaps may be in hazard, to have their *Spirit* over-whelmed by horrible Satanical Suggestions and Temptations, how soon can our Lord

by

by his Sovereign Power and Dominion command Satan to absolute Silence; and enable the Soul so to handle the Sword of the Spirit, as the Person shall presently enjoy their wonted Composure and Contentment of Soul, *Psalm* 73. 13, to 25.

Again, *6thly*, If a Believer sorely distressed with *manifold Afflictions*, perhaps both inward and outward, and being in hazard to sink under the same, be found crying for help; 'tis obvious, that our Lord, being God *Omniscient* (not to speak of his experimental Knowledge, and Fellow-feeling of his Peoples Infirmites) he must be perfectly acquainted with all the Causes of the said Troubles, and also with the proper Means for Relief; and thereupon being also God *Omnipotent*, can with a Word (as soon as for his Glory) command Deliverance and Out-gate from the same, *Psalm* 34. 3, 4, 5, 6. *Psalm* 116. 3, 4, 5, 6. In fine, whatever Condition we possibly can suppose the Elect Sinner in; whether as one needing Regeneration, Reconciliation, Justification, progressive Sanctification, compleat Redemption from all Enemies, or a glorious Resurrection, a solemn Publick Acquittance in the great Day of the Lord, or a joyful Entry and Eternal Abode in the Kingdom which cannot be moved: It is plain, that the *Essential* and *Mediatorial* Fulness of Christ, if duly laid open, can most perfectly answer all. On all which, I have insisted a little the more, because as I know no Gospel-subject which promiseth more, to advance the Salvation of Souls, and the Glory of Christ, than what a due Declaration of the glorious Fulness of the Mediator doth; so consequently there can be none, which Ministers stand more obliged to enlarge upon, and set in the clearest Light unto their People. That so with

with the Apostle, it may be seen that they have, 1 *Cor.* 2. 2. *Determined, to know nothing among their Flock, so much as Jesus Christ and him crucified.*

The only Head now remaining, in order to Preaching Christ aright, unto lost Sinners, is the last which was proposed, to wit, Ministers *tendering an offer of him in the Gospel*; after their having declared Man's Sin, Misery and Impotency, and on the other Hand, the Necessity of the Hypostatical Union, together with the Fulness and Suitableness of the Mediatory Offices. This Method we find observed by our Lord, who along with the Preaching of the foresaid Truths to the Church of *Laodicea*, he presently subjoins an offer of himself, and of the Riches of his Grace. *I counsel thee, to buy of me, Rev.* 3. 18.

But this Head having been fully discoursed in the preceeding Part of the Book, when insisting upon a Scheme of the Homiletical Method, from these Words, *Song* 5. 16. I shall not here further enlarge; only I must say, that the Minister whose Conscience, in tendering an offer of Christ to Sinners, doth not constrain him to a serious endeavour towards great Distinctness, Seriousness in Frame, close and importunate Reasonings, for the compelling his Hearers, to come in to the Supper, they must either be in Heart Strangers to the superlative Worth and Excellency of the glorious Christ, whom they preach; or at least, must be for the Time, considerably fallen from their first Love, and not doing their first Works, which are both most dangerous Conditions, unto the most private Person, but much more, unto any who are called unto the Holy Ministry, to preach and watch for Souls, as they who must give an Account, *Rev.* 2. 4. *Heb.* 13. 17. *Luke* 12. 45, 46.

Having

Having now discourſed, what concerneth the Diſpenſation of the Goſpel to the *Unconverted*, in order to their Conviction and Converſion, I ſhall only remind the Reader, that in giving an Account, in the entry of this Subject, of the principal Deſigns and Ends of a Goſpel Diſpenſation: I told that as more immediately and directly, it deſigneth the Converſion and Edification of the Elect of God, ſo conſequentially and eventually it alſo iſſueth in the rendering of all unbelieving Impenitent and Obſtinate Sinners *moſt inexcuſable*, in the great Day of the Lord, as having neglected ſo great a Salvation. Accordingly our Lord tells the *Jews*, that if he had not come, and ſpoken unto them, they had not had Sin, but now they had *no Cloak for their Sin*, John 15. 22. And that it ſhall be *more tollerable* for the Land of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, than for the City deſpiſing the Goſpel, *Matth.* 10. 15. Briefly conſidering the great Price of the Blood of the Son of God in purchaſing the Goſpel, and the vaſt Expence of Providence, in erecting, maintaining and furniſhing a Goſpel Miniſtry, and that the ſame Goſpel is preached unto the impenitent Unbeliever, as unto the believing and returning Sinner; and withal that God often ſuperadds, the reproving and convincing Motions of his Spirit, unto the external Diſpenſation; it is impoſſible that an *infinitely wiſe Agent*, who will be glorified by all his Works, will perform all thoſe great Things in vain. And therefore undoubtedly, *The Word of the Lord ſhall not return unto him empty, but it ſhall accompliſh that for which it was ſent*, Iſa. 55. 11.

By all which I only intend to ſhew, how much Miniſters of the Goſpel ſtand obliged in Preaching to the *Unconverted* to endeavour ſo much of Di-

Distinctness, and of a *close Reasoning* and convincing Strain, while they are declaring unto them, their Sinfulness, Misery, Impotency, and the gracious Remedy provided in Christ, as may either under the special Divine Influence of saving Grace, effectually determine them to come to Christ; or if not so, that then the great Truths of the Gospel being *clearly* and *closely* preached, may fasten and stick in their Consciences, as so many Nails, rendring a Course of Sin uneasie to them in this Life, and witnessing unanswerably against them in that which is to come. And how much this faithful Way of Preaching the Gospel, is both Ministers Duty and Interest, I suppose, none that pondereth and solidly believeth the Lord's Words unto *Ezekiel*, will in the least dispute the same, *Chap.* 3. 17, 18. *Son of Man, I have made thee a Watch-man unto the House of* Israel: *Therefore hear the Word at my Mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the Wicked from his wicked Way to save his Life: The same wicked Man shall die in his Iniquity; but his Blood will I require at thy Hand*, &c.

In short, it is evident, from this remarkable Context, that if any Minister, will adventure to act such an unfaithful Part, in such a great Trust, as to make his Sermons only Collections of some general Truths, and withal (as being void of any serious Concern about the Issue) deliver them, in such a loose, inconnect and unconvincing Way, as hath no manner of Tendency towards either the Conviction or Conversion of his People, that then infallibly, the same Gospel and his Preaching thereof, shall return with a fatal rebound upon

on his own Head. And as the Cry of Blood is great unto Heaven, so certainly that of the Blood of precious immortal Souls, will cry loudest of all others, for Vengeance upon the Destroyer.

CHAP. III.

In Preaching the Gospel aright, to the Converted, *their various* Conditions *and* Exercises *would be particularly considered. In respect of which, Regenerate Persons may be classed four Ways. Either* First, *As* Smoaking Flaxes, *in whom Grace is only beginning to appear in some sincere gracious Desires, and serious Essays God-ward. Or,* Secondly, *As more* advanced *and established Christians, having attained to more of the Assurance and Joy of believing. In dispensing the Gospel to the former, special Regard would be had, to the manifold weighty Objections, which often perplex their Spirits. These Objections being reduced to four Heads, are particularly considered and fully answered. With respect to the latter, the gradual Improvement of Grace, ought to be much pressed upon them. In order to which, several comprehensive Directions are condescended upon. The Remaining Conditions of the Converted, are considered in the following Chapters.*

HAving humbly offered some Thoughts in the preceeding Two Chapters, about the right

Manner of Preaching the Gospel to the Unconverted; it natively follows, that we should next consider the proper Method for dispensing the same to the Converted. For, however it must be owned, that in many Congregations, the number of such may be very small, and that several Ministers may be so posted, in such rude, ignorant and irreligious Parts of the Vineyard, as their Charity cannot go far that way, of which Case I spoke in the general Directions, relative to the right Dispensation of the Gospel: Yet as I would gladly hope, that it is otherwise with many Congregations, and knowing that certainly, it is otherwise in several Flocks.

I shall therefore first class the Converted, according to the *various spiritual Conditions* they use to be in, from Time to Time, while they are in this lower Nursery, preparing and making meet for their Transplantation to the higher House. And next speak a little of the right Manner of dispensing the Truths of the Gospel, in Proportion to the foresaid various Cases and Conditions. It being always to be supposed, that faithful prudent Ministers, being acquainted with the spiritual State of their Flock, will accordingly, as Workmen that needs not to be ashamed, endeavour to divide the Word of God aright among them, and so improve the great variety of Gospel Truths, as every one may have their spiritual Food in due season, *Ezek.* 34. 4, 16.

The various spiritual Conditions of the Regenerate and Converted, gives just Ground to consider them under a *Four-fold Notion* or *Respect*. As,

1 Only as *Smoaking Flaxes*, with whom Grace is only appearing, in some true serious gracious Desires after Christ, an Interest in him, Conformity.

mity to him, and Communion with him, *Isa.* 42. 3. Or, 2. As Christians, more *assured* of the Work of God's Grace in them, as having been helped distinctly, and in a lively and sensible Manner to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, mourn for Sin, and practically turn from it unto Righteousness: Upon which, their Souls know considerably, the Joy which ariseth from believing; and are thereupon greatly enlarged, running pleasantly in the way of God's Commands, *Acts* 2. 42, 46, 47. and 9. 31. Or, 3. They may be considered, as having *fallen from their first Love*, and not doing their first Works, so that their former Spirituality, Livelineſs, and holy Diligence, are very low, and much gone for the Time, *Rev.* 2. 4. Or, 4. As Persons *variously tryed* and exercised in this their militant State; sometimes with most exercising inward Soul Distress arising either from Desertion, or Temptation, or both: Again at other Times with manifold sore outward Tryals and Afflictions, *John* 16. 33.

In Preaching the Gospel aright to the *first Sort*, to wit, the Elect of God, while under the first saving Operations of the Holy Ghost, these Two Rules, I humbly conceive, would be much observed: As, 1. To give them *clear scriptural Notions* of saving Faith, sincere Repentance and new Obedience; together with solid Marks of the same: For any who knows the Heart of a Stranger in this Matter, cannot be ignorant of the deep *exercising Concern* with young Converts, to know and understand clearly and perfectly, wherein sound believing, repenting and reforming consisteth, *Acts* 2. 37. and 16. 30. And therefore 'tis certain, that no Sermon will be more agreeable and acceptable to them, than a clear and full De-

scription of those great Gospel Duties. Accordingly every faithful Minister, will undoubtedly make it his Work, to give serious exercised Souls Satisfaction in such important Questions, *Acts* 2. 38. and 16. 31. But having already discoursed those Graces and Gospel Duties at some length, I am not now to resume: Only the more plain and full the Descriptions of them be, but especially if well illustrate, and solidly proven from Scripture, 'tis sure they will so much the more answer the Design and Desire of trembling Jealous perplexed serious Souls.

The other Rule to be observed in Preaching the Gospel to Persons in such a Case is, to endeavour that the Gospel meet with their principal and most *perplexing Difficulties* and *Objections:* Which ordinarily are some or all of these Four: As, 1*st*, They either insist upon their *great Guilt*, as being thereupon afraid to come forwards to Christ; Or, 2*dly*, Upon the *Uncertainty* of their Election, and of Christ's dying for them; Or, 3*dly*, Upon their apprehended want of sufficient godly Sorrow and Love, making them ashamed to approach. Or, 4*thly*, That not being sure of their being spiritually alive, and of their being in Christ, they are thereupon afraid, that all their Prayers, and other Religious Performances, may be but dead Works, and an Abomination to the Lord. With respect to all which Objections and their Answers, I shall insist a little the more particularly, not so much from any great Difficulty in clearing the same, as to bring to remembrance, what great Ground there is for much of *Gospel Sympathy* and Concern towards all such who are undergoing the Pangs of the New-birth, and striving to enter in at the straight Way: Such Persons being often

tossed

toſſed and driven as it were, between Wind and Wave; for on the one Hand, their Souls are panting as the Hart after the Water-brooks, for a ſaving Intereſt in Chriſt, and are thereupon with all their might endeavouring to believe in him, mourn for Sin, turn from it, and engaging with the whole of new Obedience: While on the other Hand, the felt ſtrong Power of Unbelief, hardneſs of Heart, doth bind them as it were with Fetters.

As alſo their frequent *Apprehenſions* of their want of true Grace, and their *Fears* of never obtaining it, together with their frequent *Jealouſies* of Unſoundneſs and Hypocriſie, and that all will prove but Deluſions: Theſe Things, I ſay, doth ſo preſs and perplex their Spirits, that oftentimes they are in hazard of drawing hard Concluſions, in relation to their Souls Caſe; and of giving up with Means and Duties, as of no uſe unto them. And therefore certainly, no Miniſter can act a more genuine and faithful Part of a true Shepherd of Chriſt's Flock, than by diſcourſing cloſely in the moſt condeſcending and compaſſionate Manner, the ſeveral Objections, Difficulties and Scruples which uſe ſo deeply to exerciſe the Spirits of the Elect of God, while they are (ſo to ſpeak) betwixt the different pulls of the Strong and the ſtronger Man. For though the Almighty Arm performs Regeneration at once, by which the Soul is ingrafted into and united to Chriſt, and ſo really brought within the Bond of the Covenant, yet before the Perſon attain to a *clear Senſe* and *comfortable Aſſurance* of the ſame; who is it can ſufficiently declare all the Interval perplexing *Queſtions*, *Doubts*, *Fears* and *Fightings* the ſerious Soul is often made to undergo?

But now to return to the Consideration of the *Objections*, and particularly of the first, which, considering how exceeding weighty it often lies upon the Conscience of convinced humbled Sinners; 1. Some of the most remarkable and probative Instances of the Riches of Grace would be held out unto them, such as, *Manasseh*, *Paul*, the Thief on the Cross; the Woman of *Samaria*, the gross and abominable Sinners in the Church of *Corinth*, 1 Cor. 6. 9, 10, 11. Again, 2. Lest the Jealousies, Fears and Doubts of sensible Sinners should prove exceeding perplexing and distressing, as what oftentimes they do, even after some Apprehension of the Mercy of God in Christ Jesus, (they often alledging some extraordinary singular Ingredients in their Case) therefore it may be necessary to reason more closely with them, by holding out that one of God's *principal Designs* in giving Christ to Sinners, is, to exalt the greatness of pardoning Love and Mercy, so that if once a Sinner be truly sensible and penitent, and withal willing to be beholden to Christ's Righteousness for Justification, then certainly the greater the Guilt hath been, and the grosser the Aggravations of the same, there is so much the more occasion and access given for God through Christ to glorifie the *Riches of Grace*. Yea more, no doubt God accordingly is greatly pleased with such occasions for proclaiming the greatness of his Mercy, *Isa.* 1. 18.

And hence, when once the prodigal Son, tho' *greatly Guilty*, truly returns to his Father, behold how God, instead of taking any notice of, or upbraiding him in the least, with his Sin, he presently commands all the great Blessings of the Covenant to be bestowed upon him; *Luke* 15. 20, 21,

21, 22, 23. And how remarkably doth our gracious God bid defiance to the greateſt Guilt with any penitent Sinner, in that wonderful Exhortation and Call, *Iſa.* 55. 7. Where he engageth to *multiply* unto Pardon: Importing that his Mercy ſhall ſurmount all the greateſt numbers and heights of Provocations, which ever were with any Tranſgreſſor, among the Sons of Men. Briefly, Chriſt, whoſe Heart in the very midſt of his bloody and agonizing Sufferings allowed him, to cry, *Father forgive them,* can never poſſibly reject any Sinner truly returning unto him, *John* 6. 37.

And with reſpect to their Second Objection, the clearing the neceſſity of Perſons knowing firſt their *Effectual Calling,* before they can poſſibly be aſſured of their Election, (that being a Secret in the Divine Breaſt) *1 Pet.* 1. 10. This, together with Miniſters ſhewing, that a humble ſerious exerciſing Concern about the Knowledge of Election, cauſing Salvation-work to be minded as the one Thing needful, and influencing ſerious Eſſays towards Faith, Repentance and new Obedience, are all very promiſing Tokens for Good to the Soul with whom they are, *Jer.* 31. 18, 19, 20. Theſe Things I ſay being cleared and ſuitably enlarged upon, may be of conſiderable uſe, in removing the above-mentioned Difficulty.

The Third Objection is ſuch, with Reſpect to which, exerciſed Perſons, are not uſually ſo eaſily ſatisfied: And that becauſe, till *Faith* have ſomething of ſenſible Love to Chriſt, and ſenſible godly Sorrow for Sin, accompanying the ſame, the ſerious exerciſed Soul, (to whom Chriſt now, and a ſaving Intereſt in him, is become its longed for All) cannot eaſily be perſwaded of

true Faith. And therefore it is humbly conceived, that however the cautioning of such Persons against the seeking of any *meritorious Qualifications* to bring with them to Christ, may be a most seasonable Admonition in this Case; yet considering that young Converts when once savingly taught by God, are not really seeking sensible Love and godly Sorrow so much to commend them to Christ, in any legal meritorious Way, as truly to *assure* themselves, that their Faith is sound and genuine; therefore towards the Removal of the foresaid Difficulty, it may prove effectual, for Ministers, to endeavour to clear up unto them, 1. That the Evidences of a true saving Faith are really with them. And, 2. That where there is once true Faith, though never so weak, that there certainly the Person is welcome to the Lord Jesus Christ, *John* 6. 37. *Isa.* 42. 3.

And in clearing the Evidences of Faith to such serious doubting Souls; it's evident, that the most *condescending* (providing always they be Scriptural and Solid) should be pitched upon, and in the plainest Manner imaginable laid open to them: For 'tis notour, that half a Sentence in Preaching Marks, if either dark or ambiguous, or too high, respecting rather the Degrees and Growth, than the Habit and Truth of Grace, will perplex such Souls exceedingly; they being the Churches timorous *Kids*, in hazard to start and run at every Thing, *Song* 1. 8. And therefore, 1*st*, A Secret Superlative *Heart-esteem* of Christ as an All-sufficient and suitable Saviour; the Soul accounting him the Pearl of great Price. 2*dly*, Sensible Soul longings and *Pantings* for a saving Interest in him above all Portions. 3*dly*, The Soul's refusing to sit down *satisfied* under the most smiling Temporal Providences,

Providences, without some Hope of a special Relation to Christ. 4*thly*, A cordial *Willingness* to dethrone all former Idols for Christ. 5*thly*, Heart Satisfaction with a *whole* Christ, in all his Offices, and in all his Terms; as being most willing to subject both the inward and outward Man to his Law, and their Person and all, to be for his Service and Glory. 6*thly*, Frequent serious *Essays* towards distinct and lively covenanting with him. 7*thly*, Serious *Bemoanings* of the Power of natural Darkness, Unbelief, Coldrifeness, and Hardness of Heart, as hindering them from that clear sensible lively way of closing with the Lord Jesus Christ, which their Souls would gladly attain unto. 8*thly*, A *practical Concern* to please Christ, by abstaining from Sin, and aiming at Duty, even tho' not assured of an Interest in him. I say, these *plain Marks*, and such like, all which are clearly founded on the Word of God, and use to be among the first Effects of saving Illumination and Faith, would be improven towards the satisfying of young Christians, as to the good Work, its being truly begun in them. And certainly in so doing Ministers will not only act a very wise and compassionate part towards Christ's Lambs, but will also very much imitate him, who never did break the bruised Reed, nor quench the smoaking Flax, *Isa.* 42. 3.

The other Head relative to weak Faith, if sound, its being most acceptable to Christ, is so evident both from Scripture, 1 *Kings* 14. 13. *Matth.* 13. 31. 1 *John* 2. 12. and from its real apprehension of the Lord Jesus Christ the Saviour, that it may both be very easily and most convincingly cleared.

I come

I come now to the last Objection, to wit, Satan's frequently suggesting to serious Souls, when first beginning to seek the Lord in earnest, that they being without spiritual Life, and not *in Christ*, all their Prayers and other Religious Performances are all but dead Works, and an Abomination to the Lord, and that therefore they had best leave them undone. For clearing of which, as it would be, 1. fairly granted, that Persons wilfully continuing in the Love and Practice of Sin, and who only in a customary and formal way confess Sin and seek for Mercy and Grace, while in the mean time, their Hearts are neither in the least affected with the Dishonour done to God, nor any ways resolved to turn from the same; that in that case the Professions, Prayers, Resolutions, Vows, Attendance on Ordinances, Communicating, or any other external Religious Performances of all such Persons, are undoubtedly the *Sacrifice of the Wicked*, which are an Abomination to the Lord, *Prov.* 15. 8. So, 2. on the other hand, it would be declared, that every Soul convinced of their Sin and Misery, and of the Fulness and Suitableness of Christ, and who thereupon are longing for a saving Interest in him, and seriously crying for the subduing of spiritual Plagues, and for the quickening sanctifying Power of the Grace of God, are Persons having more of spiritual Life in them, than what they *do suppose*, and whose Prayers are not only infallibly most acceptable to God, but their Persons also; and that, as being truly united to the Lord Jesus Christ by Faith in him. And therefore, however with *Ephraim*, such may look upon themselves as Persons most unlovely and unacceptable in the Sight of a Holy God, that yet God is saying concerning them, *Is* Ephraim *my dear Son?*

Son? Is he a pleasant Child? For since I spoke against him, I do earnestly remember him still, Jer. 31. 20. This and other like Contexts, such as *Prov.* 28. 14. *Jer.* 3. 1, 12, 14. but especially that of the Father's having compassion, running and meeting, and embracing the Prodigal Son, and that even while *yet afar off*, cannot but furnish a most full and satisfying Answer to the present Difficulty.

The second supposed Condition of the Converted falls in next to be discoursed, which respecteth the more *assured* and *established* Christian, whose Faith and Love being strong and in lively Exercise, they are thereupon delighting in the Duties of Holiness, and enjoying a Sense of the Peace and Love of God therein, as we find recorded, *Acts* 9. 31. And walking in the *Fear* of the Lord, and in the *Comfort* of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

While the Godly are in this excellent case, fat and flourishing in the Courts of their God, 'tis clear, that the principal Concern which the Gospel hath in them, must be to exhort them more and more to *improve their Graces*, and so to cause their Spices to flow forth, in order to the detaining their Beloved, and causing him to eat of his pleasant Fruits, *Song* 3. 4. & 4. 16.

With respect to which, the Exhortations to improve our Talents, to grow in Grace, and to perfect Holiness, are every where so frequent in the Scriptures, that they cannot be easily enumerated. Neither can it be otherwise; the Design of the Holy Ghost in implanting Grace, being to bring it gradually to Perfection, that so the Redeemed of the Lord may be made perfect in Knowledge, Love and Obedience, in order to their immediate and perfect Enjoyment of a Holy God. So much

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we are told, *Phil.* 1. 6. *Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good Work in you, will perform it until the Day of Jesus Christ.* And therefore 'tis plain, that Ministers are very much concerned, to insist upon and press home all such Exhortations, as tend to the Growth of Grace, and Advance in Practical Godliness, 2 *Cor.* 7. 1. 2 *Pet.* 3. 18.

And here no doubt, *particular Directions* towards the right Improvement of Grace, and especially while under the more full and sensible Influences of the Divine Presence, would be condescended upon? Such as, 1. To improve it in the *conscionable Performance* of the two great Duties of *Watchfulness* and *Prayer*; both which are often and most seriously recommended by our Lord, as the great practical Duties of a Christian, *Luke* 21. 36. *Mark* 13. 33, 35. And therefore the particular Import of both would be opened up: That of watching, as implying, 1. An holy *awful Remembrance* of God through the Day, calling to mind his Soveraignty over us, his Law above us, his Omniscient and Holy Eye upon us, and the Great Day of the Lord which is before us, and thereupon pondering the Path of our Feet in the whole of our Conversation, *Psal.* 119. 168. 2. An habitual and constant *Carefulness* to abstain from all known Sin, from all Temptations to it, or any Appearance of it, and especially from predominant Sins, which do so easily beset us, *Heb.* 12. 1. 1 *Thess.* 5. 22. 3. A serious *Attention* to present Duty, even the Duty of the present Day and Hour, together with a close Application to the same, that so come our Lord at what Hour he will, we may not be surprized, *Matth.* 24. 42. *Eccles.* 9. 10.

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And so likewise the Import of *praying always* would be declared, as requiring at all times, 1. A *good Conscience*, called by the Apostle, a Heart sprinkled from an evil Conscience, that so holy Boldness and Confidence may not be broken, *Heb.* 10. 22. And 2. An habitual *high Estimate* of Spiritual Blessings, the Soul greatly valuing and longing for the Death of Sin, the Growth of Grace, more of Conformity to and Communion with God, *Psal.* 81. 10. 3. A *Frequency* in our Approaches to the Throne of Grace, keeping up much of a spiritual Intercourse and Correspondence with Heaven, *Phil.* 3. 20 In order to which, not only would our more ordinary and stated Times for that Duty be allowed, together with serious interval Ejaculations, but even some Hours now and then (upon some special Occasions) would be as it were stolen from this present and evil World, to converse with the great and important Concerns of Eternity, *Song* 2. 14. & 4. 8. 4. Spiritual *Fervency* in our presenting our Supplications, seeking with much Presence of Mind, with great Strength of Desire, pleading with much Importunity and holy Impatience, *Hos.* 12. 3, 4. All which are but some short *Hints*, in respect of the great Import of these two concerning and leading Duties of Watching and Prayer.

A second Direction towards the right Improvement of Grace, is that of exhorting Believers to *do more than others*, as having received not only far more, but quite other Talents, than what they have gotten, *Matth.* 5. 47. And in order to this, to exhort, 1. That while formal Professors concern themselves only in the *Matter* of Duty, that they be found spiritual and holy in the *Manner* of it; not only performing the whole Course of their Obe-

Obedience from Love to God, Respect to his Command, and with an eye to the Divine Glory; but particularly, that in Duties of Worship, such as Reading, Hearing, Prayer, Praise, Communicating, they be found going about these with so much of Faith, Love, Fear and holy Reverence, as will proclaim, that in these Duties they are really aiming on the one hand to honour and worship God, and on the other, truly seeking spiritual Communion and Fellowship with him, *John* 4. 24. *Phil.* 3. 3. And 2. That while others content themselves with the visible and *external Duties* of Religion, they be found seriously exercised in the more *secret* and *inward* Duties thereof; such as, 1. Keeping *the Heart* for God, and from Sin, by noticing the Thoughts, Desires, Designs and Projects thereof, *Prov.* 4. 23. And 2. Spiritual Meditation on God, in his Glorious Attributes; upon the Mediator, in the Wonderfulness of his Person, the Fulness and Suitableness of his Offices, upon the everlasting and well ordered Covenant, upon Heaven, and our Lord's Appearance there before the Throne, in relation to his People's Concerns, together with his certain and second Coming, and the great Glory to be revealed in that Day, *Col.* 3. 1. And so, 3. *Self-examination*, in relation to State, Frame, Walk and Attainments; noticing accurately God's Comings and Goings to and from the Soul, and observing timeously the first Beginnings of a spiritual Decay, in order to the preventing the same, *Psal.* 119. 59, 60. 1 *Cor.* 11. 28. And 4. *Secret Fasting* and Prayer, towards mourning for Backslidings, and wrestling for the Death of predominant Sins, and supplicating for some special important Mercies; as also for renewing Covenant with God, in order to a more close and holy

holy walking with him than what formerly, *Matth.* 6. 16.

Thirdly, as another Direction towards improving Grace, 'tis certainly most proper to exhort Believers, *to be much in the Exercise of all the Graces of the Spirit;* which cannot but greatly tend to the strengthening thereof, seeing all Habits are much bettered by frequent Acts. Accordingly our Lord assureth us, that to *him that hath shall be given, Matth.* 13. 12. meaning, to him that rightly exerciseth the Grace which he hath already received.

And therefore Believers would be exhorted to exercise, 1. The Grace of *Knowledge*, that leading and influencing Grace, by viewing and reflecting on the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ, upon the great Beauty and Excellency of true Holiness, and on the great and manifold Evil of Sin, upon the Vanity of all worldly Enjoyments, and on the great Import and Consequence of Eternity and eternal Concerns, 2 *Cor.* 4. 18.

And so also, 2. to be much in the Exercise of the Grace of *Faith*, that Mother and nourishing Grace, by realizing frequently with *Moses*, the Invisible God, the unseen Glorious Christ, and the future great Recompence of Reward, *Heb.* 11. 26, 27. As also by a frequent renewing their Choice of Christ upon Gospel Terms, accounting him more and more the Wisdom and Power of God; and thereupon crying daily for the sensible Execution of all the Offices upon their Hearts, *Gal.* 2. 20. And likewise by improving and pleading with holy Boldness the several gracious Promises of the Covenant from time to time according to need; believing solidly the Performance of the same, from an All-sufficient God, engaged by the perfect

perfect and meritorious Performances of the Lord Jesus Christ, *Heb.* 4. 15, 16. & 10. 22.

Thus also, 3. The lively Exercise of the Grace of *Love*, that animating and constraining Grace, would be much pressed, in order to its producing all its several Acts: As 1. That of *Esteem*, by keeping up an high Estimate of Christ, and impressing the Soul with high and honourable Thoughts of him through the Day, *Song* 5. 10. 2. That of *Desire*, in filling the Soul with fervent Pantings for more of Conformity to and Communion with him, *Song* 4. 16. 3. That of *Delight*, in causing the Soul to answer all its Wants in him, and rejoice in his Favour and Fulness, in the midst of all Trials and Afflictions whatsoever, *Hab.* 3. 17, 18. 4. That of *Gratitude*, by obliging the Soul generously to offer it self and its all unto him, to be for his Service and Glory, and thereupon constraining the Person in the whole of their Conversation to live unto his Praise, *Psal.* 116. 9, 12.

And 4. In regard that the *Remains* of in-dwelling Sin, together with their daily defiling Influence upon Heart and Life, will no doubt call even the most advanced Believer to be often at the Fountain open'd for Sin and for Uncleanness; therefore the frequent and serious Exercise of *Evangelical Repentance*, that Soul-composing and refreshing Grace would be also exhorted unto: That so the gracious Soul, by a daily sincere confession of the Sins of Nature and Life, and by a godly mourning for the same, as dishonourable and grieving to God, and thereupon flying afresh unto the Blood of sprinkling for pardoning Mercy and Soul-restoring Grace, may attain to so much of a comfortable Sense of the Divine Favour, as will enable them to finish their Course of Duties and Difficulties

ties with some measure of Joy, *Matth.* 5. 4. And thus by exercising frequenly all the several Graces of the Spirit, each Grace shall gather *more* and *more Strength*, and thereupon become more easy and pleasant in its Actings unto the Soul: And upon the whole, the Believer shall fall into a blessed Habit and Custom of practical Godliness, which again shall introduce much of secret and sweet Communion with God in the Wilderness, *Song* 5. 1. *John* 14. 21, 23.

Another and fourth Direction towards Believers improving Grace, which certainly ought not to be omitted, is that of exhorting them *to abide in Christ*, in order to their improving the great Fountain-Fulness of Grace, which is treasured up in him *John* 15. 4, 5. And to render this Direction the more plain and practicable, these *Three* Heads would be cleared: As, 1. That Believers are not the Vine, but only the *Branches*; and that therefore any Grace with them, whether habitual or actual, is only Communications from the Holy Ghost, as sent by the Lord Jesus Christ, *John* 16. 13, 14. 2. It being thereupon most evident, that the Principle of spiritual Life, together with its most noble and perfect Actings in the Godly, are still but something created and dependent, and consequently defectible and liable to Decays: I say, upon these accounts, the great and absolute Necessity of a *daily Dependance* upon the Lord Jesus Christ, as the glorious living Head of Influences, for the Preservation, lively Exercise, and Increase of habitual Grace, would be very much insisted on; and that as being a Matter of the greatest consequence to the Life of Godliness, and the special Mean so much recommended and encouraged in Scripture, *Hos.* 14. 5, 6, 7, 8. *Song* 4. 16. *John* 15.

And therefore, 3. The Nature and *right Manner* of this Dependance upon the noble Vine, would also be opened up; shewing, 1. How Faith must realize and call to mind the essential and mediatorial Fulness of our Lord, towards his advancing and perfecting all Grace and Gifts in his People: He being the Glorious Head of the Church, who hath the Seven Spirits of God, *Rev.* 3. 1. 2. How Faith must also solidly represent unto the Soul, our Lord's Appearance and *Intercession* before the Throne, and that for the procuring the effectual Applications of the Holy Ghost, towards his People's gradual Sanctification, *John* 17. 17. *Heb.* 4. 14, 16. 3. How thereupon Faith ought to lay hold upon the Promises; such as *Hos.* 14. 5. *Psal.* 72. 6. *Isa.* 27. 2, 3. *John* 15. 5. and with holy Confidence plead the Performance of the same. All which would also be urged with proper *Arguments*; such as the intrinsick Weakness and Insufficiency of habitual Grace, the Necessity of actual Influences, towards Spirituality in Frame, the lively Performance of Duties, resisting of Temptations, encountring with Difficulties, and especially towards our becoming convincingly and exemplarly holy and fruitful to God's Praise and great Glory, *Psal.* 119. 32, 37. And considering our Lord's positive Assertion and Promise, *John* 15. 4, 5. Surely such Souls who thus live near their Root, and abide much therein, are of all others like to have most ground to sing with *David*, Psal. 52. 8. *But I am like a green Olive-tree in the House of God; I trust in the Mercy of God for ever and ever.* And also with *Paul*, Phil. 4. 13. *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

The Third supposed Condition of the Converted, is that of their being fallen from their first Love, *and not doing their first Works. In preaching the Gospel to Believers in this case, it seems proper,* 1. *That some clear Symptoms and Evidences of their spiritual Decay, should be condescended on, towards affecting and awakening Conscience.* 2. *The great Sin and Danger of such a Condition, would be next demonstrate, that so Conviction may issue in Contrition.* 3. *The Import of the Repentance or* second Conversion *proper for such Persons, would be opened up.* 4. *To set all the closer home (considering the great Influence of carnal Security) some most serious repeated Calls and Exhortations, enforced by the most weighty Promises and Threatnings, adjusted to such a Case, would be next improven. The proper* scriptural Topicks, *for all those preceeding general Heads, are particularly declared. The Fourth supposed Condition of the Godly, is that of Tryal and Affliction, which oftentimes is inward and spiritual; consisting either,* 1. *In Desertion; or* 2. *In Satanical Temptations. In preaching the Gospel to the deserted complaining Believer, the following Method seems most promising. As* 1. *That on the one hand, their Desertion*

may suitably affect the Soul; and on the other, old Love may be kindled afresh, to a withdrawn Christ, there would be some close Interrogatories about the Grounds of their Complaint. 2. *They would be exhorted to serious self-searching, in order to their removing any Grounds of Provocation. Upon finding of which they would,* 3. *Be exhorted to a speedy Return and Reformation. But withall,* 4. *In case the Desertion be found to be more from* Soveraignty, *than Provocation (for clearing of which several Marks are condescended upon) then the deserted Believer is rather to be instructed and comforted, than reproved or discouraged.*

WE come now to treat of the Third supposed *Condition* of the Converted, which respecteth their Case, when considered as *fallen from their first Love*, and not doing their first Works, *Rev.* 2. 4.

In speaking to which, Ministers would no doubt be most particular and full: For this case being not only often the Condition of the People of God, but also having most lamentable Consequences; such as banishing Light, Life, Strength and Joy from the Soul, and introducing spiritual Darkness and Decays, almost to the very Destruction of the noble spiritual Life, and of the great Privileges and Enjoyments thereof, *Psal.* 51. 8, 11, 12.

Therefore as *Remedy*, the following Method seems proper to be observed, in preaching the Gospel aright to Believers in such a low spiritual Condition as this: As, 1. Some clear *Evidences* and Signs

Signs of Persons being truly fallen from their first Love, would be insisted on, that so Conscience being deeply convinced and affected, may awaken and rouze the secure Believer from his spiritual Lethargy. 2. Upon this, the great *Sin* and *Danger* of such a Condition would be demonstrate to them, that so Conviction may come the length of Contrition. 3. Believers in such a case, being Persons who for the time, with *Peter*, need a second Conversion; therefore, as they would be exhorted to *Repentance*, so also the Import of that Repentance, and of doing their first Works, which our Lord holds out as necessary towards their Recovery, would be cleared up. 4. They being also (while in that case) considerably under the Power of spiritual Sloth and Security; therefore most serious repeated Calls and Exhortations, set home with Promises and Threatnings, would be made use of towards the awakening and regaining them. Accordingly, if we a little ponder that complex Direction given by our Lord to the Church of *Ephesus*, when fallen from her first Love, we shall upon the matter find all those four Particulars implied therein, *Rev.* 2. 4, 5. *Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first Love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first Works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy Candlestick out of his Place, except thou repent.*

The first Head respecteth to the *Evidences* of a spiritual Decay, which are obvious and plain, the Signs of it being many: As 1. Great *Forgetfulness* of God through the Day, in respect of what use to be. 2. Low Thoughts and *faint Impressions* of Christ, and of Conformity to him, and Communion with him; yea, and that even while his

transcendent Glory, and the great Excellency of those spiritual Blessings are held forth in the Gospel, *Song* 5. 2. 3. Prevailing *Carnality* and Earthly-mindedness, so that the Bulk of the Thoughts, Desires, Projects and Endeavours, are greatly plunged in things sensual and temporal, and the Soul very much sitting down contented with the same, *Song* 5. 3. 4. Little or *no Delight* in spiritual Duties; such as, Prayer, Praising, Reading, Hearing, *Rev.* 2. 4. 5. Prevailing *Formality* in the Performance of them, so that instead of Presence of Mind, affecting Impressions of God, Distinctness, fervent Pantings and Out-goings of Soul after God, there is much of vain wanderings, worldly Thoughts, Confusion, and general overly Petitions to God, together with much of Indifferency about an Answer to them, *Song* 3. 1. 6. Unusual *Untenderness* of Conscience, adventuring at times to omit even known Duties, and allowing far more of Freedom in Speech and Conversation before others than what formerly, when there was a Watch upon the Door of their Lips, and when they pondered all the Paths of their Feet: and thus the Christian's *second* Ways, like *David*'s, sometimes differ very far from their *first*. 7. Great *Unconcernedness* under all the Means of Grace, so that the most serious Exhortations, closest Reasonings, plainest Reproofs, severest Threatnings, or most alluring Promises, make but very little Impression upon the Soul, or at most only produce an overly passing Thought or two in the Conscience, *Song* 5. 2, 3. 8. Little or *no Zeal* for the Glory of God, so that instead of that serious Concern upon the Spirit to please and glorify God, in every Step of the Conversation, and daily to bring forth some Fruit to his Praise, which was with the Soul

Soul when lively; behold the greateſt Coldneſs and Indifference, in relation to the Divine Glory, and the Intereſts thereof, *Phil.* 2. 21. Theſe and ſeveral other ſuch like *Tokens* of a low ſpiritual Condition, if plainly held forth, and Conſcience thereupon be appealed, do certainly promiſe as a proper Mean through the Divine Bleſſing to find out and awaken the Guilty.

The ſecond Direction is that of ſhewing backſliden Believers the *great Sin and Danger* of this their preſent Condition, that ſo Conviction may ariſe to Contrition and godly Sorrow, *Luke* 22. 59, 60. And certainly the *Sinfulneſs* of it muſt be great: For, 1. In this caſe the Heart is much away from God, and following after lying Vanities, and conſequently the Soul and *Subſtance* of the Chriſtian's Religion is much wanting: For when once the Soul comes to be much eſtranged to high and honourable Thoughts of God, and to ſpiritualizing Impreſſions of his glorious Perfections, and to fervent Deſires after him, there can remain but little of the Heart to God for the time. And hence, 2. As another Proof of the great Sinfulneſs of this caſe, behold the whole of the Perſon's Duties are in a great meaſure but *dead* and lifeleſs Performances, as being greatly ſpoiled with Coldrifeneſs and Formality: So that (abſtract from the Principle of ſpiritual Life, lying deep as a Winter Root under Ground) there is much of a near Approach to the old natural State of dead Works. And if ſo, then ſurely great Guilt muſt be here, in thus inverting ſo far the Deſign of noble, quickening and fructifying Grace, *Rev.* 3. 15, 16. 3. The great *Barrenneſs* under all the Means of Grace, which attends this decayed backſliding Condition, muſt certainly

also greatly add to the Sinfulness thereof: For, while instead of advancing in Knowledge, Faith, Love, or abounding more and more in good Works, the Soul is rather decreasing in all these, and becomes more and more dead, slothful and backward to what is good, what great Guilt must there undoubtedly be here? *Rev.* 2. 4. 4. There are also manifold *actual Transgressions*, which such a dead decayed Condition hath a direct tendency to; such as oftentimes much Carnality in Thoughts, Words and Actions, to the Offence of the Godly, who are more tender, and to the hardening of the Wicked, and of the formal Professor. And so also manifold Omissions, yea and that perhaps of known Duties, are too often to be found with the Christian, while in this carnal Condition; Conscience being now much asleep, be what formerly. And further, which ought justly to alarm every secure Believer, behold oftentimes gross Commissions to be found with such; as in the lamentable Instances of *David*, *Solomon*, *Peter*, and others, who were otherwise great Saints. All which Guilt ought surely to affect, and that most deeply, any gracious Soul fearing the Lord, and calling to mind the Divine Holiness and Jealousy, and that especially in relation to the Provocations of Sons and Daughters, *Amos* 3. 2. *Rev.* 3. 19.

The Misery and *Danger* of this backsliden and carnal Condition, is also great: For as such, 1*st*, lye much open to Temptations, and in great hazard of complying with them: So also, 2. Their spiritual Strength for holy Duties is much gone, causing the Soul drive most heavily therein. Behold also, 3. How the Soul in this case is justly deprived of Communion with God, so that refreshing Discoveries, Manifestations and Influences former-

formerly enjoyed, are now restrained, and the Believer as it were admitted no further than the outer Court. Again, 4. The threatned Rods and Chastisements against backsliding Children, are also like to be taken up: and who knows what *bitter Ingredients* may be in the trial, before a Holy and Jealous God put an end to it: For tho' all true Believers shall have their Soul for a Prey, yet 'tis equally certain, that many of them upon the account of their Backslidings in Heart and Life, and for their long Continuance and Security under the same, have not only undergone most severe Afflictions, long Desertion, most perplexing Doubts and Fears about their spiritual Interests, as having had a *Spirit of Bondage* let loose upon them to very high degrees; but also in a dying Hour have been made to go through the Swellings of *Jordan* with the greatest Confusion and Terror imaginable, 2 *Chron.* 16. 9, 10, 11. *Psal.* 51. 8, 11, 12. All which would be held out as crying aloud upon every Soul, conscious of their having fallen from their first Love, and of their not doing their first Works, presently to repent, and turn to the Lord, lest they found such a Controversy, in the pleading of which they shall come to be distracted with the Terrors of the Lord.

The Third Direction, being to exhort to *Repentance*, Rev. 2. 5. Accordingly the Import thereof would be opened up. In order to which, *First*, The Necessity of Self-examination would be insisted upon: That so they may find out the Original Causes and Progress of their Spiritual Decay: And thereby come to see, that it was, 1. By their forgetting and losing the *clear Discoveries* and Impressions of the Superlative Glory of Christ, of the great Evil of Sin, and of the Beauty

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of Holiness, and of the Sweetness of Communion with God; and, 2. By their being *less frequent* in Prayer, where the Soul lies open to the Dew of Heaven; and, 3. By their being less *fervent* in it, and not wrestling for the Increase of Grace, according to the great Import and Worth of the same: And, 4. By their becoming unconcerned and *formal* in attending on the Ordinances; not coming with Spiritual Thirst, and Hunger, nor receiving the Word with that Attention, Faith and Love, with which formerly they had done: And, 5. By their becoming gradually more and more *untender* in Conscience, and uncircumspect in Walk, allowing old Idols too much to ascend the Throne, breaking some special Vows betwixt God and them; and turning less concerned to please and glorifie God in the whole of their Conversation, than what formerly they were; and, 6. By their *omitting* those spiritualizing Duties of keeping the Heart, Spiritual Meditation, Ejaculatory Prayer, Secret Fasting, Christian Fellowship; by reason of all which, they had thus fallen from their first Love, and were not doing their first Works.

And therefore, 2*dly*, They would be directed in order to Repentance, to *confess* so much ingeniously to God; that while they were with him, keeping in closely with him and Conscience, that he truly was with them; but that their Sins had now justly separated between God and their Souls, *Jer.* 3. 12. And thereupon, 3*dly*, To *mourn* before God, for those their backslidings in Heart and Life: All which would be most particularly acknowledged with their several Aggravations, so far as Conscience calls to remembrance: And all this would be done, with much of Godly Sor-

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row for the dishonour done to God, and on the account of the great Ingratitude appearing therein, considering Electing, Redeeming and Sanctifying Love, *Psalm* 51. 4. And then, 4*thly*, The Mourning Believer would be exhorted under a deep Conviction of Guilt, and Sense of the great Power of indwelling Sin, and of the Insufficiency of habitual Grace, presently to *flee unto the Blood of Sprinkling*, improving Christ by Faith, and that both for pardoning Mercy, and for Soul-restoring Grace; crying most seriously to God, that upon the account of Christ's perfect Righteousness, he would continue to love freely, heal backslidings, and become as the dew unto *Israel*, *Psalm* 51. 7, 10. *Hos.* 14. 4, 5. And so, 5*thly*, The returning Soul would be directed without delay, *practically* to evidence and confirm their professed Repentance before God; and that by a most conscientious Watching against all known Sin, and by a punctual Performance of Duties; and withal, giving God no rest in Prayer, till he sensibly return, restoring spiritual Life, and comforting the Soul with gracious Communications of his Love as formerly. 6*thly*, Above all the backsliden Believer designing in earnest to return to God, would be particularly exhorted to *stir up* the Grace of God in them in Duty, and cautioned against their abominable Formality and Coldrifeness in using the Means of Grace, by Reading, Hearing, Praying, Praising, in such an overly Manner, as if their Souls had been void of all Knowledge, Love, or Fear of God; which certainly could not but provoke the Lord very much to restrain his Spirit from them, *Song* 5. 2, 3. And *Finally*, it seemeth highly reasonable and proper that the Believer thus returning to

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the Lord his God, should be enjoyned in a very serious and solemn Manner, to *renew Covenant* with him, that so after a particular Confession of Backslidings and Mourning for them, he may of new choose the Lord for his God, by accepting Christ in all his Offices; and choosing the Law of God in all its Precepts, for the Rule of his Life; and thereupon coming under new Vows, in the Strength of the Lord, against all known Sin; but especially against those Omissions and Commissions, by which he did lately backslide from the good Ways of the Lord, *Psalm* 119. 59, 60, 106.

The Fourth Direction being to make use of most *serious Calls* and *Exhortations* set home with Threatnings and Promises towards the awakening and recovering secure backsliden Believers; Ministers would accordingly very much apply themselves to this Part of their Work: For as the People of God, while in such a Case, are not only in a great Measure barren, bringing forth little or no Fruit to God's Praise, and causing the Mediator to see but little of the Travail of his Soul; so on the other Hand, they are in great hazard of producing wild Grapes, and of falling before some Temptation or other, to the Reproach of their Holy Profession: And therefore it must certainly be a piece of most acceptable Service to Christ, for Ministers to set themselves zealously for the spiritual Recovery of such decayed Sons and Daughters; more especially considering, that if the Lord get not Glory by them; from whom in an active Manner can he expect it in all the Church besides? *John* 15. 2.

In managing these Calls and Exhortations to Repentance, *Two Rules* would be observed. As, *First*, The Import of this Duty being opened up

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(of which I have ſpoken in the preceeding Direction) there would next be a cloſe bringing home of the Call to the Conſciences of the Perſons particularly concerned therein. And that by declaring, 1. That Perſons with whom the preceeding Marks and Signs of a ſpiritual Decay are to be found, are the very Perſons whom God is calling to return. And, 2. By ſhewing them the great Danger of ſitting the Call; ſeeing thereby ſpiritual Plagues will certainly become ſtronger and ſtronger, and conſequently Grace fall lower and lower. By which they ſhall yet further backſlide, and thereupon multiply Guilt, and ſo provoke God yet further to with-draw, and when he returns, to come with double Stripes upon them: And withal ſhewing them, that the longer they delay, they ſhall certainly be the leſs diſpoſed to return, by reaſon of the hardning Influence of Sin. 3. By bringing to their Remembrance the great Obligations they are under to return to God, and to live to his Praiſe; for, conſidering their Election, their Redemption by the precious Blood of Chriſt, as alſo their Regeneration; and all this, that they might be a peculiar holy Generation, zealous of good Works, ſurely they muſt be under the ſtrongeſt Ties to hearken to God's Call: And conſequently, how deep muſt the Divine Reſentment be, if after ſuch great Favours, they ſhould behave themſelves like ſtiff necked and rebellious Children?

Again, 4. By Expoſtulating with them, concerning the great Difference betwixt *living near God*, and *backſliding from him:* Appealing their own Experience, whether or not they have felt a great Reward in cloſe walking with God; as having then enjoyed Soul-refreſhing diſcoveries of his

his Glory, and the warm sheddings abroad of his Love, together with the sweet Influences of his Grace from Time to Time: So that inward Peace, and the Joy of the Lord, became their Strength, making Duties most pleasant, and Difficulties most easie unto them. And on the other Hand, attesting them, what *bitterness* they have found in departing from God; when thereupon they lost Peace of Conscience, a Sense of the Divine Love, and had their Confidence broken at the Throne of Grace; upon which Duties became a Burden, and every Trial a Terror, fearing always that God was about to plead a Controversie with them, *Psalm* 51. 9, 15. And therefore upon the whole, they would be most seriously obtested in the Name of the Lord to return; and thus the Call would be brought *close home* to Conscience, which is the first Rule to be observed.

The Second is, that in Calling upon backsliden Believers to return, as some of the most weighty Divine *Threatnings* against Backsliding, would be particularly insisted upon: Such as 1 *Sam.* 12. 10, 11. *Psalm* 89. 31, 32, 33. *Amos* 3. 2. *Heb.* 10. 38. *Rev.* 2. 4, 5. That so they may be awakened, out of their Security; so on the other Hand, suitable alluring *Promises* towards the answering the Soul perplexing Doubts and Fears arising from a Sense of *Guilt*, and of provoking Aggravations, would also be proclaimed. Assuring them, 1. Of the Unchangeableness of the Divine Love, *Jer.* 31. 37. And, 2. Of the Lord's great Willingness to receive them, and to continue the Covenant-relation with them, notwithstanding of their having played the Harlot with many Lovers, providing now they will in earnest return, *Jer.* 3. 1, 12, 14.

3. Shew-

3. Shewing them also the great Importunity and Earnestness, which is on Christ's Part in his Calls and Invitations unto them; repeating and redoubling the same, *Song* 6. 13. And, *Lastly*, Presenting them with some of the most remarkable Instances of the greatness of his Love and Mercy this way. Such as *David*, who though a great Transgressor, considering the complex Aggravations of his Sin, yet no sooner confessed he had sinned, than God declared he was pardoned; 2 *Sam.* 12. 13. So also *Peter*, who denied his Lord thrice; and that with an Oath, and after most solemn Vows to the contrary, and at a Time when Christ's Glory was never more at the Stake; and yet behold our Lord first looks to him with an Eye of Power and Pity, helping him to mourn and return, *Luke* 22. 59, 60. And next after his Resurrection sends him a particular Love-Message by himself, assuring him of the Continuance of his Favour, *Mark* 16. 7. And thus by shewing them, that first pardoning Mercy is ready to receive them, and next that Soul-restoring Grace is at hand to assist them, in repenting and returning again to the Lord; the Divine Call would be left upon their Conscience.

I come now to discourse the *Fourth* and last supposed *Condition* of the Converted, and to shew the proper Method of Preaching the Gospel in relation thereto. Which Case respecteth the Godly, as under various *Afflictions* and *Trials*; sometimes inward and *Spiritual*, such as discouraging damping *Desertion*, and perplexing confounding *Temptations*, by reason of the Lord's hiding himself, and restraining the wonted Soul-refreshing Influences of his Spirit; together with Satan's being let loose upon them for a Time. Again at other Times,

Times, their Trials are *outward* and bodily, consisting of severe *Distempers*, *Sicknesses* and *Pains* of all kinds: So that there can no Temporal Trials be named Personal or Relative, upon the Spirit or Body, upon the Name or Estate, which the Godly are not liable unto. Yea generally speaking, they are the People of all others, in the World, who (for holy and wise Ends) are made the largest and deepest Sharers of the Cup of Afflictions. And tho' they are not all set up as Monuments this way, as *Job* and *Heman*, as not being equally strong in the Passive Graces: Yet certain it is, that according to their different predominant Sins, and suitably to the various Degrees of Grace and Gifts designed for them, and in Proportion unto the several Stations and Pieces of Work, which Providence intendeth to accomplish by them; an Alwise God (agreeably to those Ends) doth in less or in more chasten every one whom he loveth, and scourgeth every Son whom he receiveth, *Heb.* 12. 6.

That this Head of the right Manner of Preaching the Gospel unto *afflicted Believers* may be the more distinctly discoursed, I shall first consider the Case as it respecteth their Inward and *Spiritual Troubles*; and next in relation to their more *Outward* and Temporal Trials.

In Preaching to the first Sort; the Gospel hath to do with a Twofold Condition, either, 1. That of Desertion; or, 2. That of Temptation.

As to what concerneth the *Deserted* Believer, the following Method seems proper to be observed; 1. To make the Desertion *affect* suitably on the one Hand, and to *kindle* Love to an absent Christ on the other, there would be some close Interrogatories about the Grounds of the Believers

vers complaint: Such as to ask, what their Souls now want? If it be, 1. The wonted Influences of *Light*, whereby they were made clearly to discern the Glory of Christ, the Excellency of Spiritual Blessings, the Vanity of the Creature, the Evil of Sin, the Beauty of Holiness. 2. If it be the former Influences of *Life*, whereby their Souls were made like the Green Olive, having it for their Element to remember God, to love Christ, to meditate on Things heavenly, to be much in Prayer, to be tender in Conscience, and holy in Conversation. 3. If they want those gracious *Visits* in God's Courts, whereby the Word came with such a secret Divine Power, as composed their Spirits, obliged to Attention, answered all their Doubts, and sensibly encreased their Knowledge, Faith, Love, and filled their Souls as with Marrow and Fatness. 4. If they want the *Consolations* of the Holy Ghost, consisting in glorious Discoveries of the Divine Perfections, and of the excellent Properties and great Purposes of the Divine Love towards them, and of the Fulness and Suitableness of the well ordered Covenant, in relation to all their Necessities and Desires. 5. If they want that *Spirit of Grace* and Supplication, whereby their Souls enjoyed great Enlargements in that Duty, and received sensible Returns from Heaven, with the powerful Application of Promises, introducing the Accomplishment of the Mercies themselves to be fully bestowed in due time. Thus, I say, by bringing their former Spiritual Enjoyments to remembrance, not only shall their present Case affect them so much the more, but also considerably tend to inflame *old Love* towards the Lord Jesus Christ; causing their Souls to thirst for God, that they may see his Power and Glory,

so as they have seen him heretofore in the Sanctuary, *Psal.* 63. 1, 2.

2. Towards recovering the longed for Divine gracious Presence, they would be exhorted particularly to *search* and examine what may have provoked their Beloved to withdraw. And for this end to allow some time for serious Reflection upon their Heart, Frame and Walk, that so if they find, that either, 1. Prevailing *Carnality* in Thoughts, Desires, looking too affectionately towards old Idols; or, 2. *Formality* and Coldrifeness in their Approaches to the Throne of Grace, and in other religious Duties; or, 3. The Breach of some particular important Vows between God and them; or, 4. Some untenderness in Conscience, and laxness in Conversation hath provoked the Holy Spirit of God to withdraw: That thereupon they may,

3. Presently set about *returning* to the Lord their God, and that with all their Heart; by confessing those their Provocations, and mourning before the Lord for the same, and thereupon fleeing to the Blood of Sprinkling, for pardoning Mercy and Soul-restoring Grace: Which if they do not, they would be seriously warned, that their Desertion may have very fatal Effects, as issuing in a spiritual Decay, and introducing great Barrenness, which may provoke the Lord, not only to encrease and continue the Desertion, but also to cause his Hand to lye so heavy upon them, as that they shall roar all the Day long, their Bones waxing old, and their Moisture being turned into the drought of Summer, *Psalm* 32. 3, 4, 5, 6.

4. If Matters be so after the most serious Self-examination, that the deserted Believer, is not

conscious

conscious of any wicked departing from God, or of allowing himself in known Omissions or Commissions, nor of giving way to spiritual Sloath and Formality in Duties of Worship, nor yet of any of the fore-mentioned Provocations: In that Case, their Desertion would be declared to be more from *Sovereignty*, than from any standing Controversie upon the account of Sin: For though the very Remains of indwelling Sin, together with the Imperfections of our most perfect Holy Things, be sufficient Ground in Justice, for a Holy and Jealous God, to keep at a distance from the Souls of the greatest of his Saints, yet considering that Believers are under Grace, and not under the Law, 'tis not to be supposed, that a reconciled gracious God, will found a Controversie betwixt him and any of his Redeemed ones, *meerly* upon the Account of the sinful Short-comings, Infirmities and Escapes, which will cleave to the best of his People, while in this their imperfect and militant State. And therefore there is just Ground for this Distinction of God's withdrawing from Sovereignty, and from Provocation. Accordingly we find the Spouse expresly saying, *Song* 3. 5. *I charge you, O ye Daughters of Jerusalem, by the Roes and by the Hinds of the Field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my Love till he please.*

And as to the other Branch of the Divine withdrawing from *Controversie*; we are not so to understand it, as if any Measure, even the least, of vindictive Wrath or Fury could be with a reconciled God, against any Soul truly in Christ, *Isa.* 27. 4. But only that a *complex of Backslidings* in Heart and Life, more especially if continued in for some time, may so far grieve the Holy Spirit, and provoke a Jealous God against a Son or

Daughter, as to cause him to carry towards them as an offended and angry Father; by restraining the wonted Light of his Countenance from their Souls, and by correcting them with one sharp Rod upon the back of another, *Psalm* 89. 31, 32.

And therefore, upon Supposition that the Desertion complained be from *Sovereignty*, in that Case the Believer would first be Instructed and next Comforted. I say, Instructed, as to God's ends, in withdrawing even after that sovereign Way and Manner: Shewing that it may be, 1. To teach us our great *Unworthiness* even under our best Frames, of so great a Mercy and Privilege, as intimate Communion and Fellowship with the infinitely holy and glorious Lord God, who humbleth himself in beholding even the most glorious Arch-angel in Heaven, *Psalm* 113.6. And, 2. To cause us highly to *value*, admire and bless him, when at any Time he so greatly *condescends*, as to come and dwell with Men, 1 *Kings* 8. 27. And, 3. That it is for the Tryal, Exercise and further Perfection of our Graces; even to see, if our *Faith* will continue to trust him and wait for him, as the faithful unchangeable and all-wise God, who rests in his Love, and who knows best how to let out the Comforts of the Holy Ghost upon us. And so also to try, if our *Love* will hold on to esteem him and delight in him in absence; still commending him as white and ruddy, the chiefest among Ten Thousand: And if it will continue to seek him, in the whole round of Means; and withal in the mean time, to obey and serve him, as if he were shining more with the Light of his Countenance upon us. Accordingly we find, that the Lord thus deserted and afflicted Holy *Job*, *Heman* and *Asaph*, who notwithstanding were great

great and eminent Saints, of whose singular Uprightness and Holiness, the Scriptures give no small Testimony, *Job* 1. 1. *Psalm* 88. 73. And therefore in the Conclusion of their Reasonings about God's extraordinary Way towards them, they were obliged to rest satisfied in the Lord's accomplishing the above-mentioned Ends. Upon all which, the Believer thus deserted, would be exhorted to fall in with God's Designs, who hath so plainly told, *Isa.* 50. 10. *Who is among you, that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the Voice of his Servant, that walketh in Darkness, and hath no Light? Let him trust in the Name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.*

But after all, upon Supposition, the Jealous Believer continue still to fear, that the Desertion is more from *Controversie*, than from *Sovereignty*. In that Case, it would be particularly declared, that one clear and *solid Mark* of the Lord's withdrawing from Sovereignty, is his continuing in some considerable measure the *sanctifying* Influences of his Spirit with the Soul, towards their Activity and Diligence in Duty; although the *comforting* Influences be much restrained. And therefore if the deserted Soul find, 1. The *Fear* of God Influencing Tenderness in Conscience and Circumspection in Walk. And, 2. Find *Love* causing the Soul to thirst and pant for a returning God, and for that end, influencing Activity and Diligence in the whole of Means. And, 3. Find a Holy *Impatience*, and that even under smiling Providences; so that nothing can give Rest and Contentment to the Soul, till the Lord shed abroad some Sense of his Love: I say, when Matters are thus, the Believer hath just Ground to conclude, that as his Desertion is from Sovereign-

ty, so, that before long Christ's Soul will make him as the Chariots of *Amminadib*, Song 3. 2, 4. and *Chap.* 5. 8. compar'd with *Chap.* 6. 12.

The *Deserted* from Sovereignty, being once thus Instructed, he would next be *Comforted.* And that, 1. From the Consideration of there being no *standing* Controversie betwixt God and him. And, 2. From the Lord's looking upon him as *Upright*, and his continuing to be lovely in God's Account, *Psalm* 11. 7. And, 3. In the Hope of the *seasonable* return of the Divine Presence, and that with double Consolation; which the Lord often useth to bestow upon the Soul, as a reward of Grace, for the Sincerity, Constancy and Activity of their Faith and Love which appeared towards him, even during his Absence, *Isa.* 54. 7, 8. But withal, the Believer in this Case would still be *advertised*, that he hath to do with a Sovereign God, who must not be limited, either as to the Time or Manner of his returning; but must be waited upon in the way of Duty, as an All-wise and gracious God, who being a God of Judgment, weighs all Circumstances, and knows best the exact Time and Manner, that will be most for his Glory, and the Believers Good, *Isa.* 30. 18. *And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have Mercy upon you; for the Lord is a God of Judgment; blessed are all they that wait for him.*

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

The Second Branch of the Godly's Spiritual Trouble, is that of Satanical Temptations. *The Nature of which is described. Satan in forming them, consults particularly the various Cases of the Godly. As,* 1. *When they are first moving God-ward, and essaying to close with the Lord Jesus Christ; behold then, he insinuates, that insuperable Difficulties, both upon God's part and their own, lye in the way.* 2. *When the Work of Grace, is a little more advanced, behold then, the grand Temptation, of all's being Delusions, or at best, but a common Work of the Spirit, is greatly Improven by him. The Case of serious perplexed Souls, under such Temptations, calls for a special regard from the Gospel. The several Scriptural Topicks, adjusted to the clearing and removing the foresaid Temptations, are particularly condescended upon; together with the right Manner of their Application, in Preaching the Gospel.*

THE Second Branch of Spiritual Trouble with which the Godly are often afflicted, is that of *Temptation*, when the Believers Soul is greatly assaulted and perplexed with horrible Temptations and Suggestions from Satan; which as so many fiery Darts drink up the Spirits, leaving neither Strength, nor Comfort in the Soul, *Job* 6. 4. *Eph.* 6. 16.

Towards preaching the Gospel aright, in relation to this case, the following Method is humbly proposed: As, 1. It seemeth proper to hold forth the *Frequency* of this Case, with many of the People of God; that so it may not only be seen, not to be so extraordinary and singular, as what many when at first exercised with it, do suppose, but also be understood to be most consistent with the Truth of saving Grace, 1 *Cor.* 10. 13. And in declaring this Head, the several Kinds of these Soul-distressing Temptations, would be particularly cleared, that thereby the Gospel may the more fully answer the various Cases of all concerned. 2. The most proper *Scriptural Means* towards resisting and overcoming Satan in those his perplexing Temptations and Suggestions, would be most distinctly proposed, *Eph.* 6. 10 to 18. 3. That (in the mean time) the poor tossed Soul may be supported, the *Comforts* of the well-ordered and everlasting Covenant would be suitably applied, *Isa.* 40. 1. & 54. 9, 10, 11.

The first Head, relative to the *Frequency* of this Case, may be cleared, 1. From the manifold notour Instances of Scripture Saints; such as *Job*, *Heman*, *Asaph*, *David*, *Paul*, all Men greatly beloved of God, and yet at times sorely tryed with Temptations: Some of them with *Job* filled with the *Arrows* of the Almighty, *Job* 6. 4. and others with *Heman* distracted with the *Terrors* of the Lord, *Psal.* 88. 15. Temptations being so termed, because often, while the Soul is under them, God is represented as full of Wrath and Fury against the Person: Some again, with *Asaph*, almost *unhinged* as to the Faith of any Reality in Religion, *Psal.* 73. 13. And others, with *David*, so dark and confused, as to account all the Divine Promises

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but only so many *Delusions*, *Psal.* 116. 11. And even *Paul*, that great Favourite of Heaven, behold a Messenger of Satan's is sent to buffet him, bringing his Spirit under great Distress, 2 *Cor.* 12. 7, 8. 2. The *Ordinariness* of the Case may be also cleared from the undeniable Experience of the People of God in all Ages of the Church; there being but few Congregations (more especially where there is any considerable number of the Godly) but there shall be found some very speaking Instances of this kind; and therefore 'tis that the Scriptures (written for the Use of the Church in all Ages) are so full of Directions and Comforts for Persons so exercised.

But to make all the more convincing and comfortable to the tempted and tossed Soul, who is often crying out, that there is *no Sorrow like unto their Sorrow*; it seemeth necessary to condescend most particularly upon the several *Kinds* of Temptations with which Satan from the greatest Malice and Subtilty (as knowing he can only bruize the Heel in the Way) assaults the Spirits of the People of God.

And here it would be declared how the old subtile Serpent, by reason of his great Wisdom and Experience, hath a great Variety of Temptations, adjusted to all the several Cases and Circumstances of the Godly, while in this imperfect militant State; and how he can accordingly, with the greatest Advantage apply and improve the same, 2 *Cor.* 2. 11.

But considering the Largeness of this Subject, 'tis impossible that any should expect from these few Sheets any full Account thereof; more especially considering the *Party* to whom they are directed, who are supposed to have considerable Know-

Knowledge thereof. And therefore I shall only offer some few Thoughts for bringing to remembrance some of the more *principal Heads* of Satan's Temptations, by which he often bears very hard upon the Spirits of the Godly.

Towards the understanding of which, it will not be amiss to premise some distinct Notion of what is here intended by *Temptations*. To which purpose it would be considered, that by Temptations here I do not so much understand Satan's Endeavours to ensnare the People of God into Sin, by any direct influencing and stirring up of the Remains of Corruption in them for that End; as his *suggesting groundless, discouraging and terrifying Thoughts and Conclusions into their Minds*; sometimes in relation to *God*, or some of the great Truths of the Gospel; at other times with respect to their own *State*, and the Dispensations of the Divine Providence towards them. In managing of all which, he improveth the Weakness of their Knowledge, and the Faintness of their Faith and Hope, more directly than what he doth the Remains of the Lusts of the Flesh and Mind. In all which Satan's Design is twofold; first, to rob them of the *Comfort* of their Religion; and if possible, thereupon next to drive them to the greatest and worst of Extreams, *Psal.* 73. 13. 2 *Cor.* 2. 11.

These things being premised, it will be the more easy to conceive of the several Temptations by which Satan assaulteth and perplexeth the Souls of the Godly, according as what he observeth their various Conditions laying them open thereto.

As first, when the Elect of God are *beginning* in earnest to turn from Sin to God, and to endeavour seriously to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ upon Gospel Terms; behold how quickly Satan useth

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to ſuggeſt to them, 1. That they belong not to the *Election* of Grace. 2. That Chriſt *died* not for them. 3. That there was never ſuch *Guilt* as theirs for Greatneſs and heinous Aggravations. Yea ſometimes, 4. That they are guilty of *the Sin* againſt the Holy Ghoſt, and ſo cannot be pardoned. All which (ſave the laſt) together with the Anſwers proper for removing the ſaid Temptations having been fully conſidered in diſcourſing the firſt Caſe and Condition of the Converted, I ſhall not here reſume what was there advanced. Only in making ſome *methodical* Enumeration of Satan's Temptations, I could not here altogether omit them; conſidering that theſe are indeed the very firſt Aſſaults which that roaring Lyon for ordinary makes upon the Spirits of the Elect of God, when they are about to ſwear Allegiance to the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

And as for anſwer to that dreadful Suggeſtion of Perſons being guilty of the *Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt*, and that thereupon they are unpardonable; 'tis clear, That where any Soul is, 1. Seriouſly concerned about Reconciliation with God, as being truly affected with and afraid of a State of Enmity and Wrath. And 2. Is truly deſirous of pardoning Mercy, and equally thirſting for ſanctifying Grace; and, 3. In the midſt of all their Doubts, Fears and Confuſion, yet ſtill ſeeth, that 'tis only in Chriſt they can be juſtified and ſanctified, and thereupon hath a ſecret looking and longing of Soul after that Way of Salvation by a crucified Chriſt: I ſay, where theſe things are, 'tis plain from Scripture, that Miniſters have ſolid ground and Warrant to proclaim all ſuch Perſons not only *innocent* from that Sin unto Death, but that they are the very ſenſible *thirſting Souls* whom Chriſt inviteth

viteth to come to him, *Isa.* 45. 22. & 55. 1. *Matth.* 11. 28. But the *grand Device* of the Enemy in this case, is, 1. To whisper in the Breasts of the Elect of God, when first savingly enlightned, that they have gotten clear Views and Discoveries of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Remedy, which were for the time pleasant to them: And then, 2. On the other hand, when serious Souls cannot so distinctly and sensibly embrace Christ with lively Faith and Love; but perhaps feels some Remains and Stirrings of natural Enmity, Unbelief and Coldness of Heart; behold presently thereupon the old subtile Serpent cries out, that they are the Persons who have been *enlightned and tasted of the heavenly Gift*, and yet are Despisers and Rejecters of Christ; and then falsly draweth the Conclusion of their having committed the Sin against the Holy Ghost, *Heb.* 6. 4. All which, if clearly laid open, and suitably enlarged upon by the Gospel, for the use of serious tempted Souls, cannot but tend much to their Relief; more especially considering, that not only all the foresaid three Evidences of Seriousness in Salvation-work, but also several others not named, are to be found with the Elect of God, when once the noble pregnant Principle of spiritual Life begins to branch it self out amongst, and actuate the several Powers and Faculties of the Soul, and to bring forth the various Fruits of saving Knowledge, Faith, Love, godly Sorrow, and the like; as what it doth in all regenerate Persons, *Song* 4. 12. *John* 4. 14.

2. When the People of God, through Grace, have been helped to *embrace the Lord Jesus Christ*; yea and that in a very distinct and lively manner; and withal have had several sensible Proofs and Evidences of the good Work of Grace, its being begun

begun in them; behold then, the grand Temptation is, that *all is Deluſions*, or at moſt but common Operations of the Spirit of God. Which Temptation he founds much upon theſe three Grounds: 1. That oftentimes they are dark and dead in Duty, and no ways diſtinct and lively. 2. That Sin remains ſtrong in them, and oftentimes prevails over them. 3. That they are denied the high Allowances of others of the People of God, as being kept Strangers to the glorious Diſcoveries of Chriſt, and ſweet Manifeſtations of his Love, and powerful Application of his Promiſes, which they hear are the Enjoyments of other Believers. From all which Satan endeavours to perſwade the Soul of the leſs experienced Chriſtian, that 'tis impoſſible that any real ſaving Work of Grace ſhould be with them.

Which Temptation, of all being *Deluſions*, or at beſt but a common Work, being the Device by which Satan, not only for Weeks and Months, but for many Years, uſeth to perplex the Souls of the Godly, cauſing them to be Perſons of a *fearful Heart*, *weak Hands*, and *feeble Knees*, *Iſa.* 35. 3, 4. Therefore faithful Miniſters would diligently apply themſelves ſo much the more, in preaching the Goſpel, towards the effectual Removal of the ſame.

In order to which, ſeveral Truths would be cleared up to the Souls thus exerciſed: As 1. That this is a moſt ordinary and *frequent Device* of Satan's towards diſcouraging ſerious Souls in their Progreſs in Religion: The old Serpent knowing well, that while he can keep them in doubt about the *Reality* of the Foundation, that they can make but ſlow Progreſs in the Superſtructure. 2. That 'tis Perſons truly ſerious, rather than Hypocrites

or

or Formalists in Religion, whom he uses to disturb this way: For while Men are not sincere, but only lukewarm and overly in Religion, he inclines to give them no Trouble; as well knowing that a dead Form of Godliness will as certainly disappoint the Soul of Salvation at the long run, as what the most gross and open Prophaneness will do. 3. The *Groundlesness* of the abovementioned Evidences of Unsoundness in Religion would be demonstrate, by shewing, 1. That the *Frame* even of a gracious Soul may undergo very considerable Alterations, while the real *Habits* of saving Grace remain still the same: So that the same Believer may in point of Frame be exceeding distinct, spiritual and lively in the Morning, and yet against the next Approach to the Throne of Grace at Noon, may be exceeding dark and dead, in respect of what before, *Song* 4. 16. *&* 5. 2. 2. By declaring that the Remains of indwelling Sin, even in the Godly themselves, especially those favoured by the Persons Complexion, may at times make very *strong Assaults*, yea and considerably prevail: But withal, while an opposite renewed *Party* in the Heart, from a secret Love and Fear of God, doth oppose the same by a present Reluctancy, refusing to comply, and by looking to the Lord for subduing Grace, and by a speedy Confession, mourning and turning, and fleeing to the Blood of Sprinkling, when any ways overcome; that all these do proclaim the *Sincerity* of Grace in the Soul, and that Holiness hath truly the Person's Heart, however Sin usurpeth the same at times, *Rom.* 7. 14, 15, 23. 3. As to the *Difference* of spiritual Attainments and Experiences among the Godly, it would be declared, that as the different Stations, Work and Tryals of the People of God,

God, do moſt juſtly require very different ſpiritual Allowances; ſo alſo, that the complaining Believer is uncertain what great Soul Feaſts and Entertainments may be before him. And therefore that if his Soul be kept panting and thirſting for much of God, and withal made diligent in Duty, that in that caſe, inſtead of fearing that they are without God and Grace, they rather have ground to hope, that God is preparing them for Communion and Fellowſhip with himſelf, *Pſal.* 81. 10.

4. Theſe Objections being removed, ſome of the moſt clear and convincing *Evidences* of a Work of ſaving Grace would be condeſcended upon: Such as, 1*ſt*. The Soul's being ſavingly *taught* of God, and thereupon impreſſed with juſt Sentiments of the great leading Truths of the Goſpel: So that a reconciled God in Chriſt is accounted the chief Good, and the only all-ſufficient Portion for an immortal Soul. 2. Sin accounted the greateſt Evil. 3. True Holineſs reckoned not only the Soul's greateſt Ornament, but alſo its greateſt Gain and Intereſt, *John* 6. 45. 2*dly*. The Heart's being *determined*, upon the forementioned Diſcoveries, cordially to accept of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt in all his Offices, and to hate all Sin, and to reſpect all God's Commands, *Pſal.* 110. 3. 3*dly*. The principal *Deſires* of the Soul being now for the Death of Sin, and for more and more of Conformity to God and Communion with him, *Rom.* 7. 24. *Song* 4. 16. Theſe, I ſay, and ſuch like plain ſcriptural Marks of a ſaving Work of Grace, its being truly begun, would be inſiſted on; and then Conſcience appealed, how at times they have ſenſibly felt the aforeſaid Operations and bleſſed Effects of the Holy Ghoſt upon their Souls. Upon all which

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it would be from Scripture positively determined, that their grand perplexing Fear of all being *Delusions*, or but common Motions of the Spirit, is nothing else but a malicious groundless Suggestion of Satan's, who would still have the Soul to raze the Foundation, that so there may be little or no Progress made in practical Godliness; and that the Believer may be always kept unhinged as to Comfort and Assurance. And therefore the doubting serious Soul would be exhorted to guard against such a weakning Temptation in all time coming; more especially seeing that where once the good Work is truly begun, that there the Lord, who *rests in his Love*, will infallibly carry it on to Perfection, *Phil.* 1. 6.

CHAP. VI.

Besides the Temptations discoursed in the former Chapter, Satan hath yet more violent and fiery Darts. *With these he attacks the more grown and established Christian. Sometimes by most* atheistical Suggestions, *designing thereby greatly to darken and confound the Soul, in its comfortable and establishing Conceptions of God in Christ, and of the Divine Perfections. At other times, to encrease the Confusion, and to fill the Soul with Horror, he forceth in a Throng and Noise of most* blasphemous *Insinuations, endeavouring to impress wrong and gross Notions of the most glorious Objects, and of the*

the greateſt Truths in Revealed Religion. Great Sympathy is owing from Miniſters to ſuch diſtreſſed Souls. In preaching the Goſpel aright to them ſeveral Rules would be obſerved: As 1. *To clear, from Scripture and other Inſtances, that their Caſe is not ſo ſingular and extraordinary as they ſuppoſe, and that a great deal of their ſuppoſed Guilt is more Satan's than theirs.* 2. *To ſhew that oftentimes, 'tis even the* talleſt Cedars *in Chriſt's* Lebanon, *upon whom theſe high Winds of Temptations are let looſe.* 3. *To give ſome rational ſatisfying Account from Scripture of the holy, wiſe and good Ends, which God accompliſheth by ſuch Tryals.* 4. *Above all to endeavour to clear up their Intereſt in Chriſt, and in the well-ordered Covenant by ſeveral Evidences, which upon enquiry are to be found with them, even under their worſt Caſes. Some other very extraordinary Caſes in reſpect of Satanical Temptations, are diſcourſed, together with the proper ſcriptural Topicks fit to be improven towards the ſupporting and comforting of ſuch diſtreſſed and perplexed Souls.*

ABſtract from thoſe Temptations diſcourſed in the preceeding Chapter, there is in the *Third* place, another principal way by which Satan aſſaults the People of God; and that is, when he obſerveth, that by an Increaſe of Knowledge

of Gospel Truths, and by repeated Experiences of Communion and Fellowship with God, the Christian begins to be perswaded both of the Truth and Growth of Grace, and of the special Love of God towards him, then he seeth, that he must now either endeavour (so far as permitted) to confound and *shake the Mind*, in relation to some great fundamental Truths, and disturb and perplex it with horrible Suggestions, or otherwise resolve, that the knowing established Believer shall go on, rejoicing in the good Ways of the Lord. And therefore to suppress these *tall Cedars* in Christ's *Lebanon*, this malicious and subtile old Serpent, when Reins are allowed him, most wisely lays the Ax to the very Root of the Soul's Strength and Comfort.

And accordingly for that end, he 1*st* suggests *Atheistical Thoughts* towards confusing the Soul in its comfortable Conceptions and Impressions of the Glorious Deity, and of the Divine Perfections. 2*dly*. To encrease the Darkness and Confusion, he subjoineth a *Throng* of most blasphemous Insinuations, endeavouring to impress wrong and gross Notions of the most glorious Objects, and of the greatest Truths in Revealed Religion, *Psal.* 73. 18. *Psal.* 77. 3 to 10. *Eph.* 6. 18. And by these joining together he oftentimes so confoundeth and perplexeth the poor Soul, by unhinging (so far as he can) fundamental Truths, and the Comforts depending thereon, that even some of the most experienced and established Christians, when thus assaulted and wounded by his fiery Darts, are in great hazard of concluding themselves altogether void of Grace, and that nothing remains with them, but reigning *Atheism*, strong *Enmity*, and absolute *Unbelief*.

Towards

Towards preaching the Gospel aright to Believers under such horrible perplexing Temptations, as what these are; 'tis evident, that as the more of *Experience* and deep *Sympathy* there be with the Preacher, that he will be so much the more fit, under Divine Conduct and Assistance, to speak a Word in season unto weary Souls: So on the other hand, 'tis also clear, that towards preaching effectually to the Comfort of such, these four Rules would be observed: As, 1. To shew them from Scripture and other Instances, that their Case is not so very singular or *extraordinary*, as what Satan (to lead them to Despair) would cause them suppose. 2. To premise, that oftentimes 'tis the highest Cedars in Christ's *Lebanon* that the strongest Winds of Temptations are let loose upon, as Experience hath frequently confirmed. Yea, 3. To clear, that the Tryal, tho' very gloomy and weighty at the time, yet is ordered in great *Wisdom* and *Mercy*; as being designed to proclaim the Perseverance of true Grace, and the great Power of the Captain of Believers Salvation: Which is made evident in his supporting them, and in making them more than Conquerors over all the greatest and most furious Assaults, which possibly the Devil can make upon them, *Rom.* 8. 37. But withal, 4. To bring Comfort the closer home. Their *Interest in Christ*, and in the well ordered everlasting Covenant, would be cleared up by scriptural Evidences, such as those insisted upon in relation to the preceeding Temptation.

And in case they should refuse any such Marks to be with them, it being at present Midnight with their Soul: Therefore, 5. They would be closely reasoned with, *1st*, By reminding them, that such and such Evidences of Grace were at

such and *such times* with them, and that even according to their own Acknowledgment. Yea, 2. That perhaps they enjoyed so much of assurance, that they resolved *never to doubt* of their Interest in Christ any more. 3. That they were fully as much in the composed clear Exercise of their Reason, when they so concluded the Truth of Grace to be in them, as whatever they were at any other time of their Life. And thereupon, 4. To appeal them, whether or not, upon their being blessed again with the same loving, mourning and *wrestling Frames* of Soul, which sometimes they enjoyed, they would not acknowledge the Certainty of the Divine Favour towards them, and the Reality of saving Grace to be with them, and that notwithstanding all the Clouds which have overcast their Horizon. Upon all which, some pertinent *solid Inferences* being made, 'tis evident that any judicious Minister may speak exceeding closely, even to such desponding comfortless Souls; as what certainly all godly Pastors, after the noble Pattern of the great and chief Shepherd, will allow themselves to do, *Isa.* 40. 12. *&* 42. 3.

But now, after all, in case the poor exercised *tossed Soul* should continue still much in the dark, and without any Comfort; 1. The Divine *Soveraignty* would be a little improven, putting the Believer in Mind, that a Soveraign God hath Right and Power to carve out his Peoples Tryals, and not they themselves, as knowing best what Measures of Grace and Gifts he hath bestowed upon them, and what Purposes he hath in relation to them. And withal seeing that by virtue of his perfect Righteousness, infinite Wisdom, and unchangeable Love, he can do his People no wrong, nor fall into *any Mistake* in any of his Dispensations towards

towards them; so as to come short of accomplishing, in the issue, his own Glory and their Good; that therefore there is all ground in the World, even for the most distressed and tryed Christian, who is sitting in Darkness and seeing no Light, to submit to, and patiently wait for, this Holy, All-wise and Gracious God, *Isa.* 50. 10. 2. The *All-sufficiency* of the Divine Grace to support the Soul under the most weighty and threatning Temptations, and to preserve Faith and Hope from absolutely giving way, would also be particularly insisted upon: For however malicious, subtile and incessant an Enemy Satan may prove, yet 'tis still evident, than an *Almighty God*, who will not suffer any of his People to be plucked out of his Hand, is stronger and mightier than he, *John* 10. 28, 29. 2 *Cor.* 12. 9. And for confirmation of this, the exercised Soul would be appealed, how at times the Lord turneth the Storm into a Calm, and allows such Interval Breathings from his Holy Spirit, as enableth to look towards him, and to long for his gracious Presence, as in Months past. 3. To give the Soul some Satisfaction as to the *Possibility* and Easiness of their Relief, it would be shewn to them, that as their Trouble principally ariseth from Satan's being permitted to make a great *Noise* in their Breasts by the foresaid Suggestions; so their Delivery (when God's time, which is always the best, is once come) will only cost but *a Word*: I mean, from the Lyon of the Tribe of *Judah*, towards silencing the Enemy, who thereupon must crouch down, and not open his Mouth any more; so that in the twinkling of an Eye, the greatest Confusion can be turned into the greatest Quiet and Composure of Soul, *Zech.* 3. 2 *Jude* 9. *Finally*, as the Gospel in its publick Dispensation would

thus endeavour the Comfort of such Persons; so also by *private Conference* and Prayer, much Pains would be taken to remove the several Disputings, Doubts and Fears, which Satan is always suggesting, in order to the hindering any Light or Comfort from entring their Souls by the preaching of the Gospel: For who can sufficiently declare all his Devices?

I should now have concluded this *Head*; but considering that there remaineth one *principal Way* of comforting such distressed Souls, I cannot but bring it to remembrance; and that is, to assure them in the most positive and solid way and manner, that whereas they account all the *horrid Thoughts* and *blasphemous Insinuations*, which pass through their Minds, to be really and absolutely the proper Product of their own Hearts, and consequently to be intirely *their Sin* and *Guilt*, that in this they are greatly mistaken. In so far as those Blasphemies and monstrous Conceptions are much more the fiery Darts of the Wicked one, contrived and thrown in by him (as the Cup was into innocent *Benjamin*'s Sack) than what they are the genuine Offspring of the renewed and gracious Soul: And as a most confirming Proof of this, it would be most particularly insisted on, how, 1. These Suggestions are like Gall and *Wormwood* unto their Souls, imbittering their Spirits all the Day long; so far are they from being delighted in or consented unto. And, 2. How they are by strong Cries and heavy Groans looking hourly to God for Deliverance from them, as not being able to endure the least *unsuitable Thought* any ways unworthy of their Glorious God. From all which 'tis more than clear, that whatever ground of Mourning the greatest Saints will always have upon the account

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of the *Remains* of indwelling Sin, (affording Satan but too much Matter to work upon) that yet these *forced* and thrown in Blasphemies will not rise up in Condemnation against them, but rather be charged upon the Head of the Grand Tempter and Accuser of the Brethren. Accordingly we find the Holy Ghost perfectly plain in describing them; while he no ways termeth them the Sins of the Militant Believers, but only the *fiery Darts* of the Wicked One, which they ought to oppose by the Shield of Faith, *Eph.* 6. 16. Intimating clearly that they are contrived, thrown in, poysoned and inflamed by Satan; and that if Believers by Faith will oppose unto them the great Truths and Promises of the Gospel, that then they shall not only become (in a great measure) innocent, but prove Conquerors over the same in due time.

In the last place, another of Satan's grand Temptations, by which he greatly perplexeth the People of God, is, when he observeth Providence to be tryfting them with some extraordinary Affliction and Tryal, which hath an exceeding *gloomy Aspect*; then presently he is sure to strike in and improve those muddy Waters to his best Advantage.

And this leadeth to discourse the last Head relative to the supposed Cases and Conditions of the Converted; which was to consider them as oftentimes under sore *outward Afflictions and Trials.* For tho' there can be no vindictive Wrath (considering the Perfection of Christ's Satisfaction) in any of God's Dispensations towards his People, yet as a *just Memorandum* of the Divine Indignation against Sin, and as the Effect of fatherly Displeasure and necessary Chastisement, and also at times, as the Product of Divine Soveraignty, for the tryal

of the Graces of his People; the Godly themselves may be often tryſted with manifold ſore and heavy outward Troubles and Diſtreſſes, *Pſal.* 89. 31, 33.

Towards preaching the Goſpel aright in relation to this Caſe, or converſing ſuitably with the Godly in private, when their Afflictions detain them from the publick Ordinances, the following particular Heads ſeem proper to be inſiſted on: As, 1. Miniſters would endeavour by private Converſation, to learn how far Satan, that ſubtile and vigilant Adverſary, is ſtriking in with the Affliction, and endeavouring to heat the Furnace ſeven times more than what really it is in it ſelf, or as it comes from Divine Fatherly Correction. And therefore I ſhall here take Occaſion (as moſt natively falling in) to diſcourſe ſome few of Satan's Devices, which he oftentimes manageth, but with too much advantage againſt the People of God, in the Day of their Tryal and Affliction. And this I ſhall do ſo much the rather, becauſe his groſs Miſrepreſentations of, and horrible Temptations under Affliction, make up oftentimes more than the far greater half of the Trials of the People of God.

To clear all which, let us conſider the following *Devices* of Satan, by which he greatly addeth to the Affliction of the Afflicted in the Day of their Calamity: As, 1. He is ſure (when permitted) to *magnifie* the Nature, and the whole ſeveral Ingredients of the Tryal; and this he doth ſo much the more, if it be a *complex one*, conſiſting both of outward and inward Diſtreſs, or of perſonal and relative Troubles: But eſpecially if withall there be any *extraordinary Ingredient* or Circumſtance attending the ſame; ſuch as ſurprizing Suddenneſs in the manner of its coming on as a Thunderbolt, or its threatning preſent Death, or its being moſt

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severe and agonizing in its Nature, and much above the Power of Flesh and Blood to endure; or its striking at our chiefest Comforts, and threatning to disappoint some or all of our greatest Expectations in the World; I say, when thus a Tryal comes so and so circumstantiate, to be sure, Satan then presently alledgeth to the distressed Soul, that there was never Affliction or Sorrow, *like unto theirs*; and that they are, a Person chosen out by God to be made a Monument before the World; *Job* 6. 3. 2. Upon all which he fails not also to misrepresent the true Original and Spring of the Tryal; asserting confidently that infallibly all is *Wrath* and *Vengeance*, and that, that God whom they supposed reconciled, is now filled with Rage and Fury, and about to make a full end, *Job* 6. 4. *Psalm* 77. 8, 9.

Thirdly, When he observeth, that by *long continued* bodily Affliction, the Spirit is much broken, and confused, and that both the animal and vital Spirits are much decayed; behold then (as well knowing, that the Intellectual and *Rational Powers* oftentimes suffer exceedingly thereby, as falling then very low) how he endeavoureth utterly to confound the poor dejected Soul with a Thousand *melancholy groundless Apprehensions and Fears*. Such as, 1. Crying daily and hourly, in their Ears, that Death, *present Death* will instantly seize them. 2. Holding out the great *Terrour* of it, at any Time, but especially when meeting with such a dark spiritual Case, as what theirs is at present. 3. His Malice stops not here, but to sink the Soul altogether into Horror and Confusion (were it possible) how doth he often in this dark Midnight of Affliction, frighten them, with a Thousand *melancholy Prophecies*, of dreadful Events, which shall never

never come to pass. Such as, 1. That suppose the Affliction issue not so suddenly in Death, yet they shall never recover. 2. That suppose they a little recover, that yet their Distemper will altogether Disorder and Incapacitate them for any further Service or Comfort in the World; and hereupon, 3. That they will prove but a Reproach to Religion, and a Cross and Burden unto their Friends. 4. That therefore they had better wish for Death than for Life. 5. Upon all this, how doth he often begin to upbraid them (in their low Condition) with their Faith and Hope; maliciously Interrogating, where are now *their Hopes*, of acting for God in the World, and of enjoying God's Goodness in the Land of the Living. I say, by all these horrible Suggestions, together with many others, not to be named, (considering their Grosness and Tendency) doth this inveterate Enemy endeavour to imbitter the Spirits of the People of God, while the Hand of a Holy God is upon them. All which, were I to enlarge, might easily be cleared, from *Hezekiah*'s Case, *Isa.* 38. 9, to 21. from *Job*'s Case, *Chap. 6th, 7th,* and *10th.* and from *David*'s, *Psalm* 40. 1, 2. and 116. 3, 6, 8.

But now if any here should enquire, for what ends doth Satan thus attack the Godly in the Day of their Affliction? The Answer upon a little serious Reflection, cannot but become considerably plain; he doing this, 1. To suppress the Two Principal strengthning Graces, which are *Faith* and *Hope:* That so, 2. The Soul being robbed of all sensible Help and Comfort, may not only greatly sink under its Burden, but also be disposed for entertaining harsh Thoughts of God, and for uttering unadvised Words in relation to him and his

his Way; by all which, 3. He aimeth (did God give way) to get the Child of God to run to the *greateſt Extreams*, to the diſhonouring of God, the reproaching of Religion, the hardning of the Wicked, and the offending the Generation of the Righteous.

And therefore, 2. Miniſters having once learned, how much of *Satan's Hand* and Influence may be in the Believers Trouble, they would accordingly endeavour clearly to diſtinguiſh between the *real* afflictive Diſpenſations, as ſent from God; and the ſinking *groundleſs* Temptations which are from Satan: For tho' it be true, that Satan muſt be permitted of God in all his Attacks upon the Godly, yet afflicted Souls being once made to underſtand his *Devices* therein, and that it is not their God, but their Enemy, who is thus bearing ſo hard upon them; they inſtantly recover a great deal of Patience, compoſure of Spirit, and Strength, towards waiting for God, and reſiſting the malicious and groundleſs Suggeſtions of the Devil. And therefore 'tis ſtill evident, that the diſtinguiſhing their Affliction from their Temptations, and accordingly giving ſcriptural Advice and Directions in relation to both, muſt be of very great uſe, not only towards their preſent Support and Comfort, but may alſo, thro' the Divine Bleſſing, conſiderably tend towards their out-gate and compleat Delivery.

3. In regard that Perſons under ſuch great Diſtreſs are oftentimes through great Confuſion, and too much of prevailing Deſpondency, in hazard to *believe all* that Satan ſuggeſteth unto them; and to turn out the worſt ſide of every Diſpenſation, and thereupon to cry out, that the whole of their Trouble is from an angry God, and that it

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is in vain to hope or wait for Salvation any more: Therefore to convince them of the contrary, *Two Things would be done:* 1. They would be appealed, whether or not a great many of the above-mentioned melancholy Apprehensions and Fears are truly with them. And, 2. Whether they were not gradually introduced into their Minds, according as their Afflictions rose higher and higher. And, 3. Whether they have not in *many Instances* found their Fears disappointed, from Time to Time; which evidently proclaims, that they were only groundless Apprehensions. And, 4. Whether at Times they have not sensibly found a secret Divine Support, and some refreshing Breathings (though short) from God upon their Souls, and these to come in a most unexpected Time and Manner; even when perhaps they were almost sinking and giving way unto the multitude of their perplexing Thoughts, *Psalm* 74. 19. From all which, it would be closely reasoned, that as *much* of their Trouble is from Satan, so certainly an unchangeable Covenant keeping God, (however sorely chastizing them) yet hath not forgotten them; and that there is yet Hope in *Israel* concerning this Thing.

4. Towards the removal both of their Affliction and Temptations, the following *Directions* seem proper. As, 1. It would be much insisted on, how their Souls again and again have been sensibly and powerfully determined to accept of the Lord Jesus Christ upon Gospel-Terms: From which their Reconciliation with God, and the impossibility of vindictive Wrath, its being in any of his Dispensations towards them, would be solidly inferred, *Psalm* 25. 10. *Rom.* 8. 1, 28. Again, 2. From this, it would also be reasoned, that infallibly

fallibly Infinite Wisdom and Love (considering they are Persons in Christ and in Covenant with God) hath seen the *whole Ingredients* of their Affliction, together with all the Circumstances thereof, to have been most proper and necessary for the Divine Glory, and their real Good; however much at the Time, the said Affliction may have a most gloomy and threatning Aspect unto them, *Jer.* 29. 11. Upon this, 3. The distressed Soul would be exhorted to patient waiting for God, who at length will not only incline his Ear, but also cause the Believer to see, that in great Wisdom and Faithfulness they were afflicted, *Psalm* 119. 67, 71, 75.

And then, 4*thly*, As was hinted before, the repeated Experience they have had of a constant *Secret Support* by the Everlasting Arms, being under them; and of the groundlesness of many of their Melancholy Apprehensions and Fears would also be closely improven, in reasoning with them. And particularly it would be remarked unto them, how many have fallen at their side, and sunk under their Troubles, whose Distress for its Weight and Duration, was not once to be named in respect of theirs; which distinguishing Providence ought greatly to Support and Comfort them, *Psalm* 73. 19, 22, 23. Upon all which, 5. They being informed that the removal of the Noise of Melancholy Suggestions, dependeth much upon Satan's being commanded Silence by God, they would accordingly be exhorted particularly to look unto the Lord for this very end: As what we find the Apostle doing, when, as he was greatly afflicted with some Thorn in the Flesh, so also had at the same time a Messenger of Satan let loose to buffet him; upon which he greatly importuned

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the Throne of Grace, 2 *Cor.* 12. 7, 8, 9. In the last Place, from all the foresaid comforting Considerations, they would be stirred up unto more of a due and chearful use of all *proper Means* adjusted to their Afflictions, as hoping for a Blessing and Success from God in the same: For considering how far the Apprehension of Delivery goes with distressed Persons; the perswading them, that there is yet some Ground of Hope in their Case cannot fail of producing most notable and excellent Effects, 2 *Kings* 20. 7. *Eccles.* 9. 7.

But in Case the perplexed trembling Soul should still insist, as fearing, that great Guilt and Provocation, is lying at the Root of all; and that God is therefore contending with them, and will not be appeased, till he make a full end.

In Answer to this, 1. The plain Gospel Method towards God's speaking Peace to his People, would be preached unto them; to wit, to return unto the Lord by sincere Confession, Mourning, and fleeing afresh unto the Blood of sprinkling; upon which the Lord will infallibly Pardon, *Psalm* 32. 4, 5, 6. 2. It would be particularly declared, that upon their being helped thus to return to the Lord, they have most solid ground for great Hope, Patience and Composure of Spirit under the most weighty Afflictions: And that upon a Twofold Account, 1. Because then through Grace they have done what was *Duty* upon their Part; and therefore *Duty* being the Sum of what the poor Creature can aim at, the Event belonging only to the Lord, they have ground to rest quiet in so far; and to bless the Lord for helping them unto the same, *Psalm* 6. 8. Again, 2. Because having been thus helped to mourn and return, improving the Righteousness of the Lord

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Jesus Christ, they have all the ground in the World solidly to believe, that all *Controversie* betwixt God and them is done away; and that if the *Affliction* be continued any longer, it must really be for their deeper Sanctification, towards fitting them either for Glory, or for greater Service for God in the World: Yea even perhaps designing by their great Experience in Afflictions and Temptations, thereby to prepare them for becoming Pillars in the Hands of other poor broken and bruized Reeds; that so in due Time they may declare unto them what *great Things* God hath done for their Souls, *Isa.* 27. 9. *Psalm.* 34. 4, 5, 6. And therefore upon the whole, they would be advised principally to cry for the sanctified Use and Fruit of the Affliction, referring the Time and Way of its removal unto an All-wise and Almighty God; who when once the proper Season for delivery is come, can never be straitned, either in contriving of proper Means, or in relation to the powerful Application thereof, *Psalm* 6. 1. *Isa.* 59. 1. *Heb.* 12. 11.

In the last Place, in regard *anxiety* and *disquiet of Spirit*, is a great Nourisher of all kinds of Trouble, therefore they would be particularly exhorted to guard against it: And that, 1. By remembring and believing that the Lord is a *God of Judgment*, who weighs and ponders the whole circumstantiate Case of his afflicted People, and will not allow the least Ingredient or Circumstance to attend the Tryal, but such as are really for his Glory, and the Believers Good; and who will not defer the Delivery *one Moment* longer than what Wisdom and Love truly requireth: And who in the whole, will most compassionately consider both his Peoples Strength and Weakness, in measuring

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out any Tryals unto them, *Isa.* 27. 7, 8. and 30. 18. Again, 2. In order to the banishing Anxiety in the Day of Trouble, the Christian would be advised particularly to call to Mind the merciful and *compassionate High Priest*, our Lord Jesus Christ, who is touched with the feeling of our Infirmities: For he, not only having a perfect Knowledge of all his People's Distresses, as God Omniscient, but being also as Man, endowed with an experimental Knowledge of the Nature and Weight of the various Afflictions and Temptations of his Members, he thereupon hath a Fellow-feeling, and most affecting Sympathy with them under them all.

So that there is with this compassionate High Priest, 1. A Knowledge and Remembrance of the *Weight* and *Distress*, which is in his People's Afflictions. And, 2. A strong Inclination towards their Help and Relief, so far as Consistent with the Glory of God, and the Sanctification of the Believer. Upon which, 3. There ariseth a most serious Intercession for supporting Grace, in the Time of the Tryal, and for instructing Grace, to cause the Believer to understand the Voice of the Rod, and for a gracious comfortable outgate in God's Time and Way, together with the sanctified use of the whole, *Isa.* 63. 9. *Zech.* 3. 1, 2. *Heb.* 4. 14, 15, 16. All which if duly considered and believed, cannot but afford most solid Grounds, for Hope, Patience and Comfort unto all the People of God under Affliction: And give them Encouragement to come boldly to the Throne of Grace, in order to their obtaining Mercy and finding Grace to help in the Time of need. Briefly, the *sure Mercies* of *David*, would be brought to the remembrance of afflicted Sons and Daughters; e-

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ven those great fixed and lasting Blessings of Reconciliation, Justification, progressive Sanctification, together with an unbroken Love-dispensation, which are to continue and run through the whole various steps and dealings of Providence towards them in their militant Condition: And thereupon shewing, that being once truly *in Christ*, they have ground in the worst of Cases, to sing with *David*, 2 Sam. 23. 5. *Altho' my House be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure, for this is all my Salvation, and all my desire, altho' he make it not to grow.*

And therefore, as the *Conclusion* of all on this Head, the Godly while under Trouble would be directed to *Reason* thus with themselves: That all they can do, or that God expecteth from them, is *to confess, mourn and return, and to plead for the sanctified use of the Rod; and thereupon in the use of proper Means, to wait patiently* upon that God, who will not always chide, nor keep his anger for ever, but after Weeping hath endured for a Night, will cause Joy to arise in the Morning, *Psalm* 30. 5. and 103. 9. Which Direction, if but duly observed, how effectually would it prevent; *1st*, A great many anxious *Enquiries*, about what Measures to take in order to their Delivery. And, *2dly*, A great many perplexing *Fears* arising from melancholy Apprehensions of this and the other sad Event to follow such and such threatning Symptoms in their Case. And therefore, let but the afflicted Christian, 1. Daily lay out the whole Case before God; 2. Remember what great things Infinite Wisdom, Power and Love can do. And thereupon, 3. According to present Ability, go in less or in more about the Performance of Personal and Relative Duties; and, 4. If not in Con-

dition for these, then let them choose out some serious experienced Friends and Acquaintances, who are capable not only to discourse their Soul-concerns, but also at Times, by a prudent innocent mixture of Conversation to divert their melancholy Thoughts, from *constant Poring* upon their Affliction, and Prophecying a Thousand nameless Fears unto themselves. And, 5. If withal the afflicted Person would particularly remark and improve the *Mixtures* of Mercy, and the Remains of the Divine Goodness, which are in their Lot, to help over their melancholy Hours; and not despondently say, that 'tis in vain for them to use any further Means for Soul or Body, or to take any Care of themselves, or seek for any Satisfaction from the Enjoyments of Life; I say, would the People of God in the Day of their Affliction, (when *Melancholy* is no small Part of their Trouble) but observe these five Rules; how should they be effectually freed by the Divine Blessing from a great deal of their sinful Anxiety: And also come in a great Measure, to laugh the Enemy to scorn, as having disappointed him in some of his principal confounding Devices, *Psalm* 27. 13, 14. *Psalm* 42. 5, 11. *Prov.* 17. 22. 2 *Cor.* 2. 11.

These *Purposes* have indeed been enlarged beyond my first Design: But I hope, that none who considers Satan's manifold Contrivances, by which he harrasseth and crusheth the Spirits of the People of God in the Day of their Affliction; and how by the same, he sends his *Ten Thousands* halting to Heaven; yea, how he often puts them in no small hazard of the greatest Extreams: I say, considering these Things, I suppose none, who hath a due Regard to the Reputation and Advancement of Religion, (which considerably de-

dependeth upon Christians good and edifying Deportment in the Day of Trouble) will too severely Censure some little Enlargement this way.

But now to shut up all, I might here by way of *Appendix* subjoin an Account of some *extraordinary Cases*, and that even amongst Persons, concerning the Truth of whose Grace, there remaineth no solid ground for Dispute: And these may be reduced to the following Two Heads.

As *First*, There are some *gracious Souls*, who after considerable spiritual Manifestations and Enjoyments allowed by the Lord, in secret Communion and Fellowship with him; yet a sovereign God, in the depth of Holy Wisdom, doth for so long a Time, restrain all sensible Influences of Light, Life and Joy from them, that their Souls become so dark, dead and comfortless, and as it were, bound with *Chains* and *Fetters*, that they cannot command one *distinct Thought*, *warm Desire*, or *fervent Expression* in Prayer to God. Upon which their Grace comes to be so much out of sight to themselves, and the restraint of the Spirit so great, that all the Ministers and Ordinances in the World cannot, for the Time, cause them to take the least of Comfort, *Psalm* 88. 14, 15, 16. *Isa.* 50. 10.

Why the Lord dealeth so with any of the Redeemed? *Soveraignty* ought to Silence us: For if he bestow the Truth of Grace, begin the good Work, and in due Time perfect it against the Day of the Lord; all *Interval Dispensations* and Means relative to the Manner of God's carrying it on, ought justly to be left unto Infinite Wisdom and Love, seeing God can never fall into any mistakes or improper Measures, *Psalm* 25. 10. *Phil.* 1. 6. And far less can do wrong to any of his People.

However to speak a little to the *Case* of such

Persons; 1. Their former *Experiences* would be most particularly examined, and every thing therein *Probative* of a saving Work would be most closely improven. 2. The *Reasons* of their present Discouragement and Dejection of Spirit, to wit, that it is, 1. Because God is absent; and that they meet not with him in any Duty. And, 2. Because they cannot love Christ, nor mourn for Sin as formerly. And, 3. Because a Spirit of Prayer is greatly restrained, and their Hearts seemingly hardned from his Fear. I say, all these being spiritual religious Grounds, they would be adduced as so many *solid Evidences* of sincere Love to God at the bottom. And then, 3. The present *tenderness* of their Conscience, as not daring to venture on the least known Sin, but carefully abstaining from the same, would be insisted upon as a solid Proof of the Fear of God to be with them. And, 4. Their repeated *Essays* at the Throne of Grace, their heavy Groans and serious Looks, their taking with them Words, and wrestling as they can, may also be taken notice of, as Tokens of their Sincerity, and consequently that *God's Heart* is towards them, and that he will in the Issue give a good Account of the sad Case they are at present in. All which, together with compassionate visiting of the distressed Person, and praying with them, may considerably tend to Support in the mean Time, and to keep the Trouble and Anguish of their Spirit from coming to such a height, and issuing in such Extreams, as what otherwise it would be in hazard to do.

A Second *Extraordinary Case*, which sometimes is also to be found with some of the People of God, is; when the Lord not only greatly restrains his Spirit, as to all sensible Influences, as in the former Case; but also permits Satan, by his

his *Suggestions* and *Temptations* to make such a horrid constant Noise in their Breasts, Night and Day, as not only disturbs and altogether darkens any Exercise of Grace, but also very much threatens and shakes (for the Time) the Exercise of *Reason* it self, *Psalm* 88. 15. In this Case, the roaring Lyon being in a great Measure let loose, 'tis not easie to conceive the dreadful *Horror* and *Confusion* he raiseth in the Spirt. And that, 1. By arguing a change of State from the change of their Frame; asserting confidently, that none but a reprobate Person, would be so far left of God as what they are. 2. By suggesting Thoughts full of Blasphemy and Enmity against God: And by doing this, especially, when they essay at any Time to go to Prayer, or to converse with the Scriptures. 3. By upbraiding them with the aforesaid Enmity and Blasphemies, as if all were really their own. And thereupon, 4. Inferring the greatness of their Guilt and Wickedness, alledging that there was never such in any Heart among Men. Upon all which, 5. He cries, Wrath, Wrath, sounding nothing but Hell in their Ears, so that every Moment they are expecting to be swallowed up. 6. And to seal all, he endeavours to assure them, of their being past all Hope, and that recovery from such a Case is absolutely impossible. Which *extraordinary Case*, when continued for any considerable Time, doth bear so very hard, not only upon the spiritual Life, but also upon the natural and rational Powers, by destroying all refreshing Appetite and composing Sleep; that the poor distressed Person's moisture, is not only dried up, and their Bones burnt as an Hearth, and their Heart smitten within them, so that they forget their necessary Bread, *Job* 7. 14. *Psalm* 102. 4. But which is far more

heavy to endure, their *Spirit is much broken*; for while a Christian's Spirit retains distinctly and clearly the *Principles* and *Rules* of solid arguing from Scripture and Reason, he can then do much so to answer his Fears and perplexing Thoughts arising from any Trouble, as to bear tolerably his Infirmity: But when once shaken in the aforesaid Principles and Rules, and withal under some Impression of the Almighty's being against him; of whom, may it not then be asked, *A wounded Spirit who can bear?* Prov. 18. 14.

The *Reasons* of this extraordinary Dispensation; (which at first View would seem inconsistent with redeeming Love) who is it will undertake fully to declare? It must certainly be owned to be one of the *depths* of Providence; in which the Divine Path is in the great Waters, and his Footsteps are not known, *Psalm* 77. 2, 3, 4, 19. However it must also be acknowledged, that some Reasons may be assigned, which ought to silence all Flesh before him: Such as, 1. That it is to proclaim the great Desert of Sin, and the greatness of the Mercy, which is in that Branch of our Salvation, to wit, our Redemption from the *Malice* and *Power* of Satan; whose tender Mercies are cruelty: And who, when allowed, can even in this Life raise such a Hell in the Breasts of the Godly themselves, *Psalm* 40. 2. and 116. 3. 2. To proclaim the great and unspeakable Obligations, which all the People of God are under to *Patience* and Submission of Spirit, under the most severe and afflictive, of their Tryals, where there is a Freedom from these Suburbs of Hell. 3. To make way for the glorious *Manifestation* of the Almighty Power and Sufficiency of Grace to support and carry through even under Satan's most furious and powerful Assaults, 2 *Cor.* 12. 9.

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But now to return to the Case it self, Let us consider, that towards discoursing aright such Persons in the foresaid Extraordinary Circumstances, some *special Rules* would be observed. As, 1. All Bowels of *Compassion* and *Tenderness* would be shown, in the whole of Ministers Conferences with them: And particularly in not chiding or upbraiding them with several Things in their way; which (though most culpable in themselves) yet are rather the produce of the Force and Violence of Confusion and Temptation, than any ways of deliberate Design and Resolution. Such as, 1. Their *Non-attendance* upon the Ordinances: Which flows not from any real Contempt thereof, but from the horrid blasphemous Mixtures and interjected Suggestions, which Satan in spite against the glorious Gospel, is most ready to contrive at such a Time. 2. Of the same kind, are the strange Expressions and *melancholy Salutations* with which they are ready to entertain Ministers in their first Addresses unto them. Crying out, (through the Violence of Temptation) not to speak of the most glorious Name, or of the blessed Saviour, or of the Holy Bible and Gospel unto them; alledging that they are irrecoverable Reprobates, and that the mentioning of these, doth but raise (what they call) Enmity, and add unto their Torment. All which will certainly be looked upon by Godly Judicious Ministers only, as, the constrained Effects of their present deep Perplexity, and bitter Agony of Spirit, arising from Satan's violent and uninterrupted Assertions of their Rejection and Reprobation. So likewise, 3. Their *extraordinary Accounts* of themselves would no ways surprize Ministers, but rather provoke Pity and Compassion; and therefore when they begin to tell, that they are utterly rejected of God, and

that both the Exercise and Punishment of the Damned are already begun in their Breasts; and that they are as sure of Wrath, as if they were in the Place of Torment already:

I say, in all these, and such like melancholy Accounts of themselves, they would be heard out *very patiently*, till they fully declare their Case. For if interrupted, Satan will surely not be wanting, as soon as the Minister is gone, presently to tell the distressed Soul, that if the Minister had known the *whole* of their Case, he would never have spoken one Word of *Comfort* to them.

2. The heavy mournful *Complaints* of such Persons being thus heard with much of Tenderness and Compassion, there would next be a special Care to advance such *Answers*, as may on the one hand be most *close* and pertinent to the Case in hand, and withal on the other, be also such as shall give the Enemy *no Advantage* or handle to work upon, so far as Ministerial Wisdom can foresee and prevent.

In order to all which, the following *particular Topicks*, or some to that purpose, seem proper to be improven, for the Support and Comfort of the distressed Soul: As, 1. When the whole Case is heard out, the Minister would ask, if they have *any more* or worse to declare. 2. Upon hearing all, he would in a very serious and grave manner, but withal with something also of a *pleasant Countenance* bespeaking Hope of their Case, declare unto them, that there have been several of the Saints of God, (some of them most eminent for Grace and Gifts) almost in all Ages of the Church, who have been sorely tryed, and that for a long time, with fiery Darts from the Wicked one, who yet have had most glorious and remarkable Deliverances from the same, and have lived and dyed with great

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Comfort and Assurance; and who withal could sing sweetly, and say *Amen* to *Psalm* 40. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5: *Job* 42. 10, 11, 12. 3. After this comfortable general Assertion, there would be particular Notice taken of the most weighty and discouraging *Ingredients* in the case of the distressed Soul; but more especially of these two: 1. As to what they call their horrid *Blasphemy* and *Enmity*; it would be declared, that it is really not them, but Satan: He, 1*st*, Making that Noise in their Breast, as taking the advantage of their present Darkness and Confusion: and, 2*dly*, Charging them with the same, as if it were contrived and consented to by them: Whereas the contrary is so evident, 1. From these dreadful Suggestions assaulting them most in their *Essays* towards Prayer. 2. From their being filled with Shame and *Confusion of Face* before the Lord, upon the account of their supposed Guilt therein. 3. From their being willing to bear any other part of their Affliction, providing only they could attain to *suitable* and *holy* Thoughts of God. 4. From their opposing these Suggestions all they can, by endeavouring to *divert* their Thoughts from them unto other Objects, and by their keeping *closed Lips*, when at times they are so driven with the Violence of the Noise, that they are afraid of crying out the same before the World. I say, by these and such like Evidences it would be demonstrated, that the Hand of some *secret Joab* is at the Root of this Matter, and not they themselves.

The second weighty and affecting *Ingredient* in their Case, which Ministers would particularly discourse, is their great Objection which they use principally to insist upon; to wit, that *it were impossible, if they were not Reprobates, that they would be so far left of God as what they are.* In answer to which, 1. Some Reasons (some of which I have

already

already named) would be given, towards justifying the Divine Procedure in such an extraordinary Dispensation; by which they may see the same not only consistent with special Love, but also to have most accountable Designs tending to the Glory of God and the Good of the Church. And here Ministers would take occasion to tell them, that the darkest and most *horrible Pits* of *Desertion, Temptation* and *Affliction,* into which possibly the Godly can be brought in their Militant State, shall be seen and acknowledged one day to have been most *efficacious* Steps and Pieces of Providence, towards their progressive and deep Sanctification, *Isa.* 27. 9. *Rom.* 8. 28. 2. In regard this *general* Answer will probably not give full Satisfaction; therefore more particularly, the *secret Workings* of Grace, which (however much suppressed at the time) yet are really with the Soul, would be drawn out and shewn to the Person. For however great *Floods* of Desertion and Temptation have over-run and hid the *true Spring* of living Water in the Heart, yet it still hath its secret *Motions* and *Bublings* up, which now (at such a time) would be most carefully searched for and laid open to the discouraged Soul. And for this end the distressed Christian would be appealed, by way of Interrogation, as to several things probative of the *Truth* and *Exercise* of saving Grace.

As first, in relation to *old Experiences,* they would be appealed how at times they have been made, 1. Sensibly to *esteem,* love and embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, as the most glorious Object, and excellent Portion of all others in the World. 2. How they have at other times been helped to *mourn* greatly for the Sinfulness of Nature and Life, and to wrestle most seriously and importunately for the Death of Sin and Growth of Grace. 3. How like-

likewise they have at times had great *Delight* in spiritual Duties; so that Reading, Hearing, Prayer, Praising, Communicating, have been sweeter to their Souls than their necessary Food: Upon all which they would be now required to take comfort. And if they shall refuse these things, as alledging they had no reality of Grace in them; they would then be next appealed, in relation to the great *sensible Light*, *Life*, Enlargement of Soul, and sanctifying Efficacy which did accompany the aforesaid Performances, and proclaimed much of a Divine Presence and Power to be in them, *Song* 5. 4, 5.

If any should here object, that God's *hidden ones*, whose Religion is not only much hid from the World, but also from themselves, could take but little Comfort from such Questions. In answer to this, it would be remarked, that as it is not an All-wise God's ordinary way to let loose those high Winds of Temptations upon such weak and unestablished Souls; but rather upon those, whose Experiences and spiritual Enjoyments require some Ballast, 2 *Cor.* 12. 7. So also suppose in Sovereignty some such should be thus tryfted, as they have had some *Seasons* better than others, between God and their Souls; the bringing the same to remembrance cannot but in less or in more tend to give them some little Support and Ground of Comfort in the mean time.

But secondly, as old Experiences would be thus improven, so likewise the present *secret Motions* of Grace in them would be digged up and declared to them: Such as, 1. Their Souls *remembring God and being troubled*, Psal. 77. 3. So that when they call to mind what once they thought they were, and enjoyed through Grace, and compare the same with their present sad Condition, behold how their very Spirits are ready to sink within them. All which

which at the bottom evidently proclaimeth, that the noble Grace of *Love*, even to a withdrawn and hiding Christ, is yet really *alive* in the Soul, and that they would give a thousand Worlds for one Blink of the Light of his Countenance. 2. Their serious *self-searching* to find out what may have provoked God to tryst them with such sore and heavy Tryals, and that with a sincere Design to remove, so far as in their Power, any Grounds of Controversy, which God may have with them, *Job* 31. 6. Which Exercise clearly speaketh out their *Hatred of Sin*, and Respect to God's Commandments, and their Willingness upon any terms to be reconciled again to God. 3. Their complaining far more of what they think *sinful* and God-dishonouring with them, such as their supposed Enmity and Blasphemy, than what they do either of their spiritual or bodily Distress: All which most evidently declare an inward *cordial Respect* to God and his Glory; in so far as, if the Lord would but keep them from Sin, they could with much more of Patience endure any other Pieces of Tryal which are in their case. 4. The secret *high Thoughts* of Christ, and of the great Happiness of his People, which now and then go through their Minds; so that even in the midst of their Distress, both Faith and Love (tho' hid from them) is causing them cry out, *Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee?* 5. Their deep *Sighs* and *Groans*, which cannot be uttered, implying their unspeakable *Sorrow* for the Divine Absence, and the most vehement Pantings for the Return of the Divine Presence, *Rom.* 8. 26. 6. Their *deep Concern*, and that not so much for an Outgate simply considered, as for a *gracious one* issuing in their Sanctification; that so they may live greatly to God's Praise and Glory in the World: I say, all these Particulars complexly considered, do most evi-

evidently demonstrate the *Truth* and *Exercise* of saving Grace to be really with the foresaid Persons; however much like a *living Spring* over-run by some high Tyde, it lye covered and hid from the Eye of the overwhelmed Soul for the time. And therefore the discovering of the abovementioned *Evidences* of Grace, and improving them as a solid Argument, 1. Against the poor dejected Believers confounding *Fears* of Reprobation. And, 2. as an undeniable Proof of the present Dispensation, its being truly *in Mercy* and really consistent with the Divine Favour; seems to be one most proper and promising way towards supporting and comforting serious Persons under the forementioned deplorable Circumstances.

Thirdly, In regard a Gracious God, to prevent the *Spirits failing* before him, doth not always contend, but sometimes allows such Persons some *short Blinks* and Breathings, whereby they attain to *one* Look and *one* Cry, with some faint Light and Liberty, tho' the Vail perhaps is presently drawn over again: I say, considering that God sometimes treats distressed Souls this way; therefore, upon the back of their heavy Complaints, they would be most closely interrogate by Ministers concerning the Lord's Kindness to them in this respect: And tho' they should begin almost to refuse, or at least greatly to diminish the same, by alledging that those Breathings cannot be from God, considering how quickly they are gone; yet this Objection would not be regarded, but upon the contrary, the composing spiritualizing refreshing *Influence* for the moment they staid, would be much insisted upon, as bespeaking undeniably their *Divine Author* and Original. And moreover they would be appealed to judge in Reason, how *unlike* it is unto Satan's Malice, and how inconsistent with his Interest, to

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influence *any* Motion or Operation upon the Spirit, which directly tendeth to strengthen Faith and Hope, and to enable to some further waiting for an absent and withdrawn God, *Psal.* 130. 1, 5, 6.

To all which if there be subjoined a distinct Condescension upon *particular Instances* of Persons, who once were in their Circumstances, but are now graciously delivered, it may also prove of great use in speaking to such Souls. For *Matter of Fact* being an undeniable Argument of the Possibility of the Event; yea Satan himself, whatever *cunning Turns* he may give it, not being able to get altogether over it; therefore, as the several *Scriptural Instances* looking this way, together with several others of the same kind contained in other Histories; so more especially, some Persons, if possible, known unto the Person distressed, would be condescended upon, as that which will have most weight. And further, as I have often known that godly Ministers, and private experienced Christians Conversation with such Persons, have been of great use to them; so particularly I have observed, that peremptory positive *comforting Assertions*, founded upon Scripture Marks and Promises, and that in opposition to Satan's bold and peremptory Allegations of the Person's utter Rejection, have also had no small Influence in this Case. All which, together with the Godly's Declarations of what *great Access* they had got at the Throne of Grace upon their account, have supported them for a long time, even until it pleased God, that the Day broke up with their Own Souls.

And finally, confident I am, that any Person, Minister or private Christian, who hath been the *Brand pluckt out of the Fire*, if they either call to mind the *Depth* of their Distress, or their *Vows* to God, in the Day of their Delivery, they will reckon

reckon it both their Duty and Honour to make Satan *repent* that he ever kept them so many Days under his Temptations in the Wilderness; or that ever, by attacking them from so many *different Grounds*, he hath so acquainted them with his manifold Devices, that they are through Grace now, not only in condition to stand their own ground, but likewise to advise others how to disappoint and defeat the Enemy, 2 *Cor.* 2. 11. *For we are not ignorant of his Devices.*

Those *extraordinary Cases*, now discoursed, I could have willingly passed over in deep Silence; but considering how much of Compassion and Bowels is owing to such distressed Souls in hazard to be swallowed up of Sorrow; and that Ministers knowing the *worst* of Cases which may be at times with some of their Flock, would enable them so much the more to *counter-act* the Enemy by speaking a Word in season. Therefore both in obedience to the Divine Precept, *Isa.* 35. 3, 4. of *strengthening and comforting the Weak, the Feeble, and those that are of a fearful Heart*; and also after the Example of some very Worthy and Judicious Authors * treating upon such Subjects; and withal confiding in the Knowledge and Prudence of the Persons for whom the Book is principally designed, I have therefore adventured humbly to offer some few Thoughts towards the Relief of such sinking Souls.

I should now have come to discourse the last Head, to wit, that of *outward Troubles* and Afflictions; but considering that it is Satan's Management of the same by *Temptations*, which oftentimes principally rendereth them most afflictive; and seeing so much hath been said upon that Head al-

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* *Dr.* Gilpin's Demonologia sacra.

ready,

ready, I shall not therefore enlarge any further upon the same.

But shall conclude all, seriously wishing and praying, that the Glorious Lord, who hath ascended up on high to receive Gifts for Men, may so remarkably pour out his Spirit upon all his *Ministers* (in respect of great Grace and Gifts) as will enable them with great *Knowledge* of the Mystery of God in Christ, and from great *Respect* unto the Salvation of immortal and precious Souls, and from great *Love* and Zeal for the Glory of God, and the Honour of the Mediator, so to manage themselves in the Dispensation of the Gospel, and in the whole of their Ministerial Performances, as may capacitate them to make their Accounts with Joy, and not with Sorrow; that so when the chief Shepherd shall appear, they may receive a Crown of Glory that fadeth not away, 1 *Pet.* 5. 4.

And now to that *Glorious God*, who through his *Son* hath contrived and purchased the great Salvation; and who hath condescended by his *Spirit* to translate the deep Eternal Counsels of the Divine Mind and Will, into the plain and holy Oracles of God, contained in the Scriptures; that so by a *Gospel Ministry* and Dispensation, there might be, by the same Holy Ghost, a powerful and saving Application of the great Redemption purchased by Christ: To *This God*, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Incomprehensible in his Love to *fallen Man*, while the sinning *Angels* perish without Remedy, be all Praise and Glory, in all the Churches of Christ, from this time and for ever. *Amen.*

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